

# *Horizon*

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ART

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CONSIDERATIONS ON THE MORAL  
PROBLEM OF OUR DAY

*By* BENEDETTO CROCE

FRAGMENT OF AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY—XIII

*by* AUGUSTUS JOHN

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POEM *by* RANDALL JARRELL

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# COMMENT

'Now that an element of fluidity has entered into the tactical situation, giving grounds'—writes the military critic—'for a reasoned optimism,' we press for an extension of this fluidity to the world of culture. Outside it is spring, and all over the world a host of 'little magazines' are putting forth their blooms, all deprived by their governments of any opportunity for cross-fertilization. In Italy there are *Aretusa* and *Mercurio*, in Switzerland *Formes et Couleurs* and *Labyrinthe*, in France *Poésies* 45, *Confluences*, *Espirit*, *L'Arbalète*, *L'Eternelle Revue*, *Le Spectateur des Arts*, *Messages*, *Cahiers du Sud*, not to mention the English number of *Fontaine*, which would do credit to any English publication. In North Africa there is *L'Arche*, in Sweden the admirable literary monthly *Nu*, in Cairo there is *Personal Landscape*, in the U.S.A. *Partisan Review*, *Accent*, *Chimaera*, *Kenyon Review*, *Sewanee Review*, *View*, *Triple V*, *The Vedanta of the West*, *Poetry*, *Hemispheres*, to name but a few; in Australia there is *Angry Penguins*, in the Argentine *Sur* and *Lettres Françaises*, and the world over there must be many hundreds more. Yet I doubt if any reader of *HORIZON* can claim to have set eyes on more than half a dozen of these since the war, and many will not even have heard of them, and we are most grateful to anyone who can send a copy here.

The Little Magazine performs three very important functions. It helps to unite young writers into groups who discover common aims, and who can seek out their counterparts in other countries; it enables the older writers to keep the public informed of their interim work (as by the publication of Joyce's 'Ulysses' in *Little Review* or his 'Work in Progress' in *Transition*); and it presents experimental or controversial work by writers who need encouragement and who are as yet incapable of producing a book. When one takes into account as well the time element, the reviews, obituaries and notes of the day, it is obvious that the number and variety of such magazines constitute a valuable indication of the cultural health of a country. They have five enemies, or wicked godmothers: Censorship, Paper Rationing, Currency Regulations, Shipping Space, and Labour Troubles. Censorship is not yet an oppressive feature to a writer in this country; he is not aware of it unless he is an anarchist, a Trotskyite, a book-reviewer, a member of the Civil Service or the armed



forces or a talker on the B.B.C. Paper rationing is particularly severe on little magazines, for the extra thousand copies which they are not allowed to print may make all the difference to their solvency and continued publication. Currency regulations explain why none of us has been able to read a single book review of Edmund Wilson's in the *New Yorker* since he took the job, and shipping space why the French have not yet been able to read any of ours. Labour troubles account for enormous gaps between one number and the next, or for paper covers which come off. Nevertheless, miscellanies continue to be born. *Orion*, a constellation in which every star was lambent, burst from its swaddling clouds and zoomed across the sky, and now *Polemic* (see inside back cover) is stripping for the arena.

What we need is an immediate loosening up of the restrictions which affect the sale and interchange of magazines throughout the world, with the licence to import, export and distribute one another; and an incessant agitation from all the magazines involved, in all their languages against all their various authorities, with the help of all their numerous well-wishers to promote an orgy, a *sacre du printemps*, of exchange and insemination, and so make free for those who need it the penicillin of the Western Mind.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The article by Croce, specially written for HORIZON, and the story by Alberto Moravia mark the beginning of our cultural relations with the new Italy. The May HORIZON will be devoted to France, and will include unpublished work by Paul Valéry, Paul Eluard and many others.

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RANDALL JARRELL  
THE DEATH OF  
THE BALL TURRET GUNNER

From my mother's sleep I fell into the State  
And I hunched in its belly till my wet fur froze.  
Six miles from earth, loosed from its dream of life,  
I woke to black flak and the nightmare fighters.  
When I died they washed me out of the turret with a hose.

[Reprinted from *Partisan Review*]

BENEDETTO CROCE

# CONSIDERATIONS ON THE MORAL PROBLEM OF OUR DAY

HISTORY is set in motion by the few and not by the many. The motive power of history works from the top downwards, and not from the bottom upwards. This is a proposition which ought not to need demonstration or even statement, and which yet requires to be stated and expounded. Indeed, it may well evoke protests and murmurs in our day and bring upon its defender the ever-ready accusation of being a rigid conservative or reactionary, as if reasonableness were not a continual 'reaction' against unreason, and balanced judgement a 'reaction' against the aberrations of common opinion. In this sense, all thinking men behave as reactionaries, whereas fundamentally they are revolutionaries, the genuine and eternal revolutionaries who alone can set the world in motion. At the present time, the myth of the 'masses' holds the field, for they, it seems, are regarded as the motive force of history and the criterion of progress. The 'masses' appear as a prodigious and mysterious force, the receptacle of hidden and irresistible wisdom and potency to which we must give ear and hearken so that we may obediently accept its answer as if from the Sibyl of old. How much nobler, and how much more human, was the word which in this connection was chosen by Giuseppe Mazzini: 'the People'; that people which in his opinion would by itself have been able to achieve the independence of Italy from foreign domination, the overthrow of her native despots, the establishment of national unity, the proclamation of the republic and the federation of the nations. All this was to be accomplished by a bold war carried like a flaming torch from the Alps to Sicily by 'the People', who were stronger far than the despised royal armies, brave and steadfast, and above all pure in spirit as the servants of kings could never be. Nevertheless anyone who went to the root of things or who sought out the real beneath the imaginary and observed the actual course of history, was bound

to discover in this 'People' nothing other than the great soul of Giuseppe Mazzini. For it was his idea, sublime in its constancy, which was realized by an *élite* of high moral and intellectual stature, by bands of volunteers, drawn only to a small extent from the artisan and agricultural classes, by the royal armies and a wise diplomacy. It was his idea which gave birth to an Italy independent and free republican in inspiration and in substance if not in the form of its institutions; an Italy which hailed Mazzini as its prophet, its educator and creator.

Later, Mazzini's 'People' was replaced by another collective entity, derived from Socialism or Communism, which he would not accept because he saw in it the materialism so repugnant to him, against which he never wearied in the fight. But here again a glance at the facts would show that this collective entity, this proletariat, as it was called, hardly contributed a single leading personality among the founders of Communism and Socialism, or among those who constructed its doctrine, formulated its rules, and formed its associations, sects, parties and institutions. For these were philosophers and learned men, writers, technicians, industrialists and politicians, all, or almost all, coming from high social strata. Saint-Simon was a count, as well as a designer of great engineering works; Enfantin and Considérant had graduated in applied science; Owen was a factory owner. Again, to leave out the Utopians, and without going as far back as Plato, More and Campanella, we see in the ranks of Socialism, which prided itself on being scientific, Marx, a doctor of philosophy who wrote on Epicurus and composed a theory of history worked out in its logical and ethical implications and a new doctrine of economic values and production. Lassalle likewise wrote a thesis on Heraclitus and composed a 'System', as well as tragedies and other literary works. Engels had been engaged in industry and commerce and was a many-sided writer of culture, who drew his inspiration from Hegel. Wilhelm Liebknecht was a university student, teacher and journalist; and I still remember him when, as an old man who wished to see Italy before he died, he was introduced and entrusted by Turati to me to act as his guide in Naples; and I remember how one day, on a visit to the Museum, standing in front of the group of the Tyrannicides, he declaimed in Greek Callistratus' famous song in their praise. In more recent times, our master in Marxism was Antonio Labriola, a University



professor and philosopher of the school of Herbart who had returned to Hegelianism. Georges Sorel was a civil engineer and a student of history, politics and economics. Lenin published some thirty volumes, including a critique of Empirio-Criticism, while Trotsky was a writer, even more accomplished than he. So it was with all of them: and it was only as curiosities of literature that one might notice the occasional naïve sociological writings or little treatises on logic by workers, which Marx was glad to praise in one of his prefaces to *Das Kapital* but to which no authority on logic ever paid any attention. In truth, the simple proletarians, had they ever thought of revolt against their teachers, might have called them all in their own phrase 'bourgeois'.

It is not, as is clear, hereby intended to detract from the seriousness, significance or power of these social movements, but simply to confirm that the motive power in history always works from the top downwards. If there were no 'masses' and their needs, there would be no history either; just as, if there were no human passions and feeling or loves and sorrows, there would be no poetry or art for which these provide the material. But poetry and art would not exist as such if there were no genius to create the form of beauty, so that their history is the history of artistic genius and not of human feelings and passions. We critics and historians of literature have been led to abandon the once cherished myth of popular poetry as the fresh and original voice of the people, which would from time to time break up the antiquated, desiccated artificial poetry and give life to new forms and new works of genius. For careful and deep research has always found cultural tradition and progress and individual genius behind the rise of poets and of ages of poetry. Thus, Homer appears at the head of a trained school of bards, and Shakespeare as in the stream of the Italian and Elizabethan Renaissance and skilled in the refinements of Italian poetry. Even the medieval epic emerges under the influence of Latin models, and the medieval Latin and Provençal lyric under that of Latin ecclesiastical poetry and the liturgical chant.<sup>1</sup> All this, indeed, is most natural and obvious, nor is it difficult to explain, since there is an explanation for everything, how it could be lost to sight. Every philosophical analysis or historical observation emphasises the primacy of thought, artistic

<sup>1</sup> See the introduction to my *Poesia popolare e poesia d'arte*, and the recent book by Guido Errante, on *Lirica romanza delle origini*, New York, 1943.

genius or practical genius. Even in the eyes of the common man, intellectual and cultural revolution precedes political revolution.

While the myth of the People or Masses ascribed to certain collective bodies all the finest and noblest of man's productions and took them away from those individuals, the so-called 'great men', whom the spirit of the world from time to time calls to that task, it did not, however, depreciate or degrade the intrinsic quality of those productions. This was done in one of those excogitations of false philosophy which characterize the extreme left wing of the Hegelian school, between 1840 and 1848. This group had not the capacity either to go beyond Hegel, and free him from the deadweight of intellectualism and scholasticism, or to preserve the profound and valuable truths which he had discovered and vigorously stated. The effect which it had was due to Marx, whose spirit was that of an agitator and prophet, a mind which knew how to evoke visions of doom and to forge powerful slogans, but which was little inclined towards criticism, philosophy or science. His theoretical work was a costly effort of his earlier days, which remained unfinished and unelaborated in his maturer years.

The historical materialism of Marx, which, properly speaking, was neither materialism nor history, was the intolerant negation of human values or, what is the same thing, the submersion and obliteration of them in the sole question which concerned him, namely, the economic struggle and the social revolution. The eighteenth-century Illuminists had readily expounded the theory of religions as priestly deceptions. But in Marxian terms, religion, thought, poetry, morality and all the things of the spirit that are not economic action, became a deception or a mask, a fiction or a façade hiding the sole reality which was the economic struggle. Homer had sung, Plato had philosophized, Jesus Christ and St. Paul had revolutionized the moral conscience, without suspecting that their work was affording secondary and indirect help to the economic struggle of the classes, and were now identified with it without remainder. Undoubtedly, there are verses that look like poetry, creeds that look like religion and attitudes that can be taken for morality, whose real reference is to economic ends, just as there is economic action which deceitfully clothes itself in non-economic terms. But when all is said and done, these things are not what they pretend to be, for tendentious science or art is

propaganda and neither science nor art, while the word for tendentious morality is hypocrisy. One hesitates whether to describe as singular obtuseness or more singular lack of reflection the attitude, which identifies these and other more or less obvious devices of the economic and political struggle with truth and beauty, morality and religion. At all events, this strange identification was made by Marx and his faithful follower Engels in a book which they wrote together in 1845-6 'on German Ideology'. This book remained the ultimate foundation of their mental life. To select one example only, the Kantian ethical theory of 'the good will', the final critique of all heteronomous ethical thought, was destroyed at a single stroke by the revelation that it was no more than a reflex of the weak German *bourgeoisie* of the day, which, unable to compete with the English or French in industry and commerce, was satisfied with the 'good will'!<sup>1</sup>

The line of thought so light-heartedly and frivolously opened was gaily pursued over and over again for some years in Germany, Italy and other countries in Europe, when about the end of last century historical materialism was the fashion and was viewed as the revelation of the *arcana imperii*, the well-concealed realities of politics. People, however, soon got tired of the game when they saw its monotony, and history returned to conducting its investigations and reasoning once again upon the old, sound criteria, distinguishing the true from the false, the beautiful from the ugly and the moral from the amoral. Independence was thus restored to values which had been unwisely denied. The reduction or denial of values has still continued in Russia ever since the canonization of Marxian theory by the victorious revolution. But even there doubts can be observed coming to the surface from time to time. For example, after the plays of Shakespeare had for some years been given an economic and class interpretation, it came to be perceived that their subject was not economic classes, as it was the convention to teach and assert, but human nature, human nature under the name of Hamlet or Macbeth.<sup>2</sup> The same

<sup>1</sup>*Conversazioni critiche*, V, 226-29, where there is also on record the explanation then given by Marx of the German War of Independence against Napoleon as due to German need for sugar and coffee denied them by the continental blockade. These early versions of Marxian doctrine throw no little light upon its intrinsic meaning and value.

<sup>2</sup>See my *Pagine sparse*, iii, 79-80.



denial of spiritual values is in another and more repugnant form apparent in what is called Fascism or Nazism, wherein these values are viewed or treated as functions of race or in accordance with the political ends of the faction which had seized the reins of power. But there is no need to develop this theme.

No wonder, then, that the supreme moral concept of liberty was overturned and trailed in the mud by the fantastic universal economic Determinism which contorted intellectual thought. This concept had in the past gone through various stages, but in the early nineteenth century it was elevated into the ideal and the religion of the modern world. But it was soon said by Marx and his followers and it has often been said since—even today it is being stated afresh as if the veil were now being torn for the first time from a naked and shameful reality—that Liberty so widely acclaimed is a function of Capitalist economic aims and of the profit which Capitalist economy derives from Free Trade, competition and the wage-earning status of the proletariat, a form of exploitation following on from slavery and serfdom. The theory and history of political liberty would therefore stand or fall with Capitalism.<sup>1</sup>

Is there any substance of truth in this theory and interpretation of history? There is error, the opposite of truth, which, just because it is opposite, is certainly motivated by truth, the motive force being real facts which have been misunderstood and which have given rise to the false views, improper transitions and ambiguous concepts and reasoning attaching to this interpretation. I will draw attention to two of these motive forces.

The first may be called contiguity in time. The mighty development and enlargement of thought, culture and knowledge which combined to form the new consciousness of liberty and the Liberal idea was, from another angle, the same as that which, through science and technical development, was the preparation for the Industrial Revolution, for the increased use and power of mechanical methods and machines, for new relations between the social classes and, finally, the rise to power of the industrious middle class. The nature and scale, the haste and speed of increased production of wealth through Capitalism, and the

<sup>1</sup> Among the latest exponents of this view is H. J. Laski, *The Rise of European Liberalism, An Essay in Interpretation*; London, 1936; see *Conversazioni critiche*, V, 287–90.

changed aspect of the world resulting therefrom, is described and hymned, among other matters, in certain lyrical and epic pages of the *Communist Manifesto*, published by Marx and Engels in 1848. The contemporary appearance of the new ferment in the fields of political ethics and of economics was wittily expressed in the early decades of the nineteenth century by the epigram that the century demanded with one breath 'Liberal institutions and steam navigation'. It was, then, an easy matter for minds, not inquiring profoundly into ideas and their origins and not disposed to follow up impressions and imaginations, to mix and fuse the two processes, which were distinct within themselves even if of necessity not divergent. Further, it was not then recollected that the cradle of modern liberty was not the business world but the world of religious struggle, of natural law, of Nonconformist demands for freedom, of toleration, of philosophy and science as disruptive and progressive forces. It was easy to fall into the optimistic illusion that one and the same act and principle had opened to man the sure way and straightforward advance to a better life, spiritually and materially, obtaining a two-fold redemption in a single act.

The second motive force, which was of secondary importance and based upon the first, tended to avail itself of the contiguity in the two processes, which it converted into identity, for the purpose of defending economic interests, which were by this method idealized into ethical values or were illuminated by ethical values. This was a sophistic piece of logic, an advocate's oratorical expedient which we should be surprised not to find in this case, since it recurs in so many others like it.

But the profound distinction existing between things and concepts very soon arose in the faithful conscience of the more wary Liberals. The most awesome example was Sismondi, author of the Liberal-inspired *Histoire des républiques italiennes au moyen âge*, who was, with Constant, the first to evolve a theory of the modern idea of liberty as distinguished from the ancient idea. He was the apostle of the modern idea, always remembered by us Italians with gratitude for the help he gave us during our rebirth as a nation. A disciple of Adam Smith, Sismondi, in a treatise on economics which he wrote in 1803, had accepted in-full both the exclusion of State intervention in the production of wealth and complete faith in free competition. But his conversion from this

point of view came about in 1818, and was confirmed in his *Nouveaux Essais* of a year later. The reason which he gave for it was his own experience of the collapse of the working class under the impact of triumphant industrialism and the misery of the agricultural classes whose former prosperity had been destroyed by the agrarian revolution. It was, however, probably determined or excited by the polemics, schemes and experiments of Robert Owen, to which Sismondi's attention had been called.<sup>1</sup> He thus brought himself to demand that the State, adopting the part of moral conscience, should intervene in economic life with a series of remedies. And these remedies, whatever the particular practicality or efficacy of those which Sismondi devised, went to prove that the ethical idea of freedom and the economic idea of free competition are not one and the same thing, but two things, capable of coming into conflict with one another, and that the first, like a supreme court, is always called upon to absorb the second in itself and to give unity to human life.

It would be not a little instructive to follow the history of the objections, the corrections and the reservations which from that time forward emerged irrepressible from the moral consciousness of Liberalism against the menace of the heavy yoke of abstract economic deduction. This history, beginning with the protests of writers like Carlyle and Ruskin,<sup>2</sup> and the gradual admissions which the framers of economic systems were obliged to make as to the limits of economic laws and the necessary modifications derived from concepts outside the sphere of economics, developed into political action such as the great English inquiries into the conditions of the factory workers and the laws passed to regulate them. In England this action followed hard on the triumph of Free Trade. The process continued in the gradually increasing mass of social legislation from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, and in the progressive relaxation of restrictions

<sup>1</sup>On the historical origins of Sismondi's conversion the most accurate research is in a recent memoir by W. Rappard, of Geneva University, contained in the *Revue d'Alger*, I (1944), Parts 1-2.

<sup>2</sup>J. Ruskin, *Unto this Last*, published in 1860 and translated into Italian by Amendola, with the title *Le fonti delle ricchezze*; a new translation is being prepared by Professor Felice Villani, with the title *I diritti del Lavoro*, and a judicious historical introduction.



and the legal recognition of the workers' right to combine and freedom to strike, and so forth.

Even Marxian Socialism, which aimed at removing at once and for all the root of ills and conflicts by purely economic means through the attainment of Communistic equalitarianism, was revealed as at once Utopian and ineffective. This, moreover, was the meaning in the last years of the nineteenth century of the 'Crisis of Marxism', as it was called, for it was compelled to adopt the notion of reform, i.e. of a continuous stream of measures adapted to place and time according to the exigencies and limitations of historical development. There thus came about a correction of the Marxian view of history. This, like its Hegelian model, arrived, although by a different route, at the cessation and negation of the historical process, which it had taken as its point of departure. But the development to which we are referring forms a main part of the history of the nineteenth century, a knowledge of which must here be taken for granted.

In the theoretical sphere the conflict which was being waged was concerned with the distinction between moral and political Liberalism and economic Liberalism and with the subjection and envelopment of the latter by the former, or, as it is happily expressed in Italian thanks to a word, which I do not think exists in other languages, between '*Liberalismo*' (Liberalism) and '*Liberismo*' (*laissez faire*). Economic Science itself conduced to clarifying the distinction when it underwent the refining transformation from 'Political Economy', as it was originally conceived, to 'Pure Economics' which concerned itself with questions far beyond the particular and contingent solutions of social and historical problems and, for that very reason, also beyond the solutions both of free economy (*liberismo*) and State-controlled economy. Rejected and despised by the Marxists, as a new and cunning instrument of Capitalism for its own defence, the science of Pure Economics led in fact to a liberation from the capitalistic presuppositions of other systems through its doctrines, which went so far as to embrace even Economics considered in isolation, the *homo æconomicus*, and the individual apart from any human society. There was still lacking a speculative foundation for the distinction, but it was to be elaborated later on in the Philosophy of the Spirit, with its doctrine of the two moments of *praxis*, the one vital or economic, the other moral, both equally necessary,

and the latter perpetually overcoming and reshaping the former. In consequence of this solution of the problem, no one now thinks of 'making Economics moral', as it used to be called, but on the contrary there is a demand that Economics should with ever-increasing energy assert its own being, no longer regarded as moral, but rather as amoral, because therein lies its purpose and its truth. Nevertheless moral consciousness must always intervene to give it cohesion, since the life of man is related to a single principle, namely this moral principle, whose function it is, in the final analysis, to regulate economic conflicts and to dictate the action for their solution. There is no question of a choice between the need for Free Trade, in which demand and supply follow the good pleasure of each individual in accordance with his desires, and the other need to restrain, repress and normalize these individual demands so as to provide for the definite needs of social life; there is no question of choice between the drive towards private property and private enterprise and the drive towards common ownership and enterprise regulated by the community, since no choice is conceivable between two motives inherent in human life, neither of which can be dispensed with. The problem, the only problem in practice, is to act justly, which means morally in concrete cases, in other words, to establish and promote the greatest degree of liberty or human creativeness possible in given conditions. Any other form of justice which may claim to establish itself through the exclusive adoption in all situations of one or other of the opposing economic schemes is Utopian, and in so far as it cannot be brought into existence it is not moral; for the non-existent is not moral, and the nothingness of Utopias is evident when the touchstone of historical circumstances is applied, as for instance to the individualism of Bastiat, and no less to the communism of Marx. This latter has certainly not been attained in Russia, either from the economic or the political standpoint, a fact which is well known to everyone with any knowledge of the thought of Marx. There is no other justice existing in the world but that which operates in reference to each individual case (or in the customary phrase, according to time, place and circumstance). The decisions of this justice are so various that a just sentence in one case may be unjust if it is applied to another; what is independence in one case may in another be dictation and servility.

The account of a world of constant and uniform justice and of equal well-being for all is not even a pretty fable, because while thought fails to conceive it, fancy fails equally to imagine it, and the romances which have tried to describe it are silly and tiresome. The world (there is nothing new in what is said here, but it is nevertheless something which people seem glad at times to forget)—the world is diversity and conflict and war; its end is not the well-being of individuals, but the elevation of the world above its own level, the creation of ever higher and more complex forms, the divine poem of life. This is not a paradox or a philosophic expedient to get out of a difficulty, but it is reality as it is experienced at every moment, reality which is tragic or sublime, according to the epithet preferred. To this law of reality the only counterpart on the same plane is the moral and religious idea of liberty, and for this reason it cannot in any way depend upon or come to terms with the vital and economic needs which it dominates in intimate relationship, being directed as the occasion requires, either to the satisfaction of those needs and the attainment of well-being in order to live a good life, or else to the renunciation of all these things in order to die a good death. When people reiterate, as they often do today, that man cannot be free unless he enjoys well-being or a certain determinate measure of well-being (although logically it is indeterminable), they forget here also the simple reality, attested by history and experience, of the sacrifice of well-being and even of life itself, which good men make in order to do their duty and preserve their human worth, and they fall into the error, or horror, of subordinating an infinite to a finite value.

As a consequence of this dissociation which has taken place between Liberty and *laissez faire* in Economics (*liberismo economico*), it would appear that the idea of Liberty has remained a disembodied spirit, without power or reality, so that having lost its former embodiment, it failed later on to acquire a fresh body in a different economic system. But the shedding of extraneous encumbrances does not mean a dissipation of one's own power, but rather an increase; just as poetry increases instead of lessening its force when it rids itself of this and that particular or special subject-matter and takes to itself the whole world as its topic, leaving itself free to adopt that aspect of it which inspiration from time to time seizes on in order to transmute it into poetry.

Nevertheless the scandalized head-shakings and lamentations over the decay of liberty began from that moment when the two classical parties of conservatives and progressives ceased to oppose and attack each other in the parliaments of Europe, and there arose in their place manifold parties with an economic trend, ready to engage in debate on public affairs and propound compromises. Later on these lamentations and recriminations became more numerous, and finally they gave way to announcements of the grave sickness and death of liberty, which were not always received with the grief demanded by the situation. Moreover they were not themselves always in the form of elegies, but at times were couched in joyful and bacchic vein. At the present time these certificates of death and of advanced senile decay are appearing almost daily in newspapers and books, supported and accompanied, however, by comments which in no wise reinforce them on the essential point, but rather conflict with it. I may open a newspaper and read: 'In England political Liberalism is dead beyond hope, and its mental outlook, even, is replaced by Fabian Socialism, which is as the poles asunder'; and yet the writer adds, 'The English are Liberals by temperament'.<sup>1</sup> But this, contrariwise, is to recognize the effective dominion which Liberalism still maintains over there; and at the same time it is an augury that other peoples also may rise to secure that strong and safe possession and preserve it in like form as 'temperament', that is, as something in the very marrow of their being, almost a natural fact. Further, the 'Fabianism' referred to, i.e. the concrete and progressive realization of economic reforms, which at first were found only in the programmes of the Socialists, is the sure proof that it has itself broken away from the ancient union with *Laissez faire* (*liberismo*). I take up a very instructive book on 'the Deflation of American Ideals'<sup>2</sup>; in what does this deflation consist? It consists in the abandonment of the unthinking optimism of the nineteenth century and more particularly of

<sup>1</sup> This is taken from the Socialist paper *Avanti* (Rome, 19 September 1944), in an article headed 'Segreti d'Inghilterra,' written by an Italian who has long experience of English life. The same paper, 13 January 1945 has the following: 'English democracy is an imponderable and is not identified with a party; its roots are in the consciousness of British men and women on a plane transcending parties.'

<sup>2</sup> *The Deflation of American Ideals*, an ethical guide for New Dealers by Edgar Kemler, Littaker Fellow, Harvard University (Washington, 1941).

the forty years between 1830 and 1870; in the vindication of the ethico-religious character of Liberalism against the economic bonds which had constricted it, and against the contingent arguments; in the attainment of the conviction that even were capitalism destroyed, men would not thereby become free, and that rather it was essential to direct and guide the great corporations and concentrations of power towards popular ends. Even here, therefore, 'deflation' would be more properly described as 'purification'. And as for the obituary notices of liberty, more was needed to make them credible than the outbursts of contempt and sneering mockery which in Italy and elsewhere were vented against its empty tomb by a drunk and disorderly crew. It was in fact necessary to prove—since a principle and an ideal were in question—that another principle and ideal, logically coherent, had taken their place. This proof has not so far received from any quarter clear and reasoned statement. Again, even in Russia, where Liberalism had not earlier come to maturity, it did not mature in the new order. On the contrary it was completely banned, action having been directed towards the economic revolution and the technical foundations of power, and having in that sphere produced great results. Even in Russia, then, when the future is envisaged, it is nothing other than liberty which is anticipated, political liberty which is now lacking, but which will be attained all in good time. Although men are standing in weariness and horror amid a slaughter and a ruin whose full extent and gravity are not yet visible, amid the loss likewise of their spiritual heritage, their traditions, experiences, acquired notions of culture, moral habits, fine sensibilities, and although their minds, impatient and oblivious of a past which is vanishing from the horizon, cry aloud and wait for the miracle of something wholly new, yet not a glimmer of this new thing, so ardently desired and foretold, illumines their souls, not a tremor or a promise stirs in their hearts. Most certainly the void cannot be filled by the schemes in process of elaboration for barren and coercive political assemblies and for new holy alliances, out of which will come what may, but which by their very nature are in no state to generate moral life. Again, from another line of approach, the need is not met by the planned political restorations of old gospels, which in the vigour of their youth and manhood possessed impetus and enthusiasm and fighting spirit and devotion



even to death, and the power to excite great thoughts and actions. But why cannot that 'new' entity of which there is so much talk be discovered anywhere? Why does the word stand today for an adjective without the substantive? The reason is simply this: the new entity is sought and expected in the future, whereas it already exists, and always has and will exist, and its name is liberty. This is the sole and everlasting lode-star of the voyagers on life's stormy sea; it alone will show the way to new things, new ideas, new points of view, new institutions, new ways of life; the world which does not will to die and which cannot die, must of necessity return to the paths of freedom, disregarding the diverse and opposing slogans of vociferous groups of men, large or small, which can never change the law of the world.

Nevertheless while Liberalism, as it has been noted already, has liquidated, alongside the errors or the superficial preparation of its practical experience, the optimistic illusion of progress without any set-back or return to outworn forms, and has developed with even greater intensity its own internal historical and dialectical consciousness, it has never concealed from itself, while at the same time preserving its faith in its own mission, the fact that the action and growth of Liberalism is confronted today by the obstacle of a force or deadweight which so far there seems no hope of removing. The nature of this force is generally explained, although perhaps metaphorically, by the predominant materialism; but strictly speaking, materialism, which is a metaphysical concept, remains as far removed from practical and moral action as the system of Thales or other Pre-Socratics, who were born before Socrates began to inquire into the human soul and establish its laws. In this connection there is the proverbial case of the fanatically materialist metaphysicians who appear in practice as humanitarian, liberal and democratic philanthropists. It is usual, too, to lay this opposing force at the door of Communism; but whatever may have been the materialistic affirmations of Marx (and they were greatly confused), and whatever doctrines of this type may have found favour in Russia, Communism in itself, in so far as it is a purely economic reform of the social structure, is not materialistic. It is not even so in the specific sense in which historical materialism animated the communistic negation of all human values that were not utilitarian. Moreover, the materialistic attitude, which is observed and condemned in

Communism, appears in an equal degree in certain systems which set out to combat it, those in fact which exalted the race, the superman, the *duce*. Perhaps the aptest word to describe it which comes spontaneously to mind is 'activism', or the activist conception of life, the pure activism which, being pure, is blind and therefore irrational, and delights in thus presenting and declaring its creed. Activism refuses to recognize and to respect values or laws of any kind, because it reveres and obeys only the passion and impulse for doing, without asking what is to be done, and why it should be done. With this designation and definition of activism, the power which we feel as our adversary, multiplies itself in time and space, emerges from the narrow confines in which it is customary to envisage it today, and compels recognition as the most recent form of that movement, that immense spiritual disorder, that irrationalism, which gave the first continuous signs of its existence in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, and was known as Romanticism.

Romanticism (in its scientific conception, without going into the vague linguistic and literary uses of the word) is nothing but Irrationalism: a particular kind of Irrationalism indeed, arising and taking shape from the divided state of mind which detached itself from traditional transcendental religion without in fact any volition on its part. In the same way it willed to accept, and yet again without its own volition or knowledge of the process, the vision of Immanence, into which is transfused whatever is eternally vital in Christianity. For that reason it embarked on the most fantastic adventures in order to avoid the anguish of the parting of the ways. The initial and justifiable struggle of Romanticism against abstract systems and Illuminist intellectualism and also against eighteenth-century *raison*, with its passion for logical and mathematical thinking, bore along in its unmeasured onrush a revolt against every idea of reason, no matter how profound this might be or how sound a corrective it might offer to the former system. The proof of this statement appears when after the conversion of the emotional line of attack into vigorous speculative criticism through the outstanding work of Hegel and the substitution of older notions by the new idea of dialectical reason, the revolt still continued, in ever-varying fashion, the Romantic revolt of whimsical sentiment and unbridled imagination. This led to the stand made by Hegel in

philosophy and by Goethe in poetry against Romanticism and their definition of it as the disease that it was. This is not the place to give either a more detailed analysis of the movement or to tell its history once again. It began with the earliest generations of Romantics, whose sadness, desolation and despair yet radiated the liveliest nobility and generosity. It passed on to succeeding generations, in which the element of morbidity gradually developed in extent and complexity, until it emerged in perversions of many kinds. Finally, as we have seen, and still see today beneath our very eyes, there came about a union of Romanticism with politics and war, not because of the spiritual cult of the nation but because of the bestial cult of race, with the ferocious letting of streams of blood amid tortures and mockery and the systematic destruction of all that man has created by long toil and operation of genius. Every spark of the ideal and every feeling of common humanity is quenched and derided. This state of mind<sup>1</sup> has manifold and countless repercussions on many sides of life, in all of which can be detected, louder or fainter, the same note. It affects politics and literature, philosophy and painting or sculpture, Nationalism or Communism, reaction and revolution, whose exponents have almost all drunk from the same poisoned well. It is, one might say, the spirit of the age,<sup>2</sup> which finds commanding expression in the words and acts of man. But the vastness of this turbulent manifestation does not rise to the grandiose and does not stimulate reverence, for even catastrophes or epidemics have a similarly wide distribution and extension, and yet we do not admire or love them or desire to share in them. Individuals or groups who have to face this spirit or to live with it and remain true to themselves, holding firm the ancient and eternal ways of thought and action and not deserting reason for unreason, such men feel and judge themselves, anxious and sorry though they be, sober men among drunkards, like Anaxagoras in Aristotle's words of praise.

Notwithstanding the impossibility of their present victory in the face of that hostile power, notwithstanding the slow development of the signs of a secure victory in the future, with the

<sup>1</sup>An analysis of a particular case of this state of mind is given in my *Misticismo politico tedesco*, in *Pagine politiche*, Bari, Laterza, 1945, pp. 9-16.

<sup>2</sup>See the note on *Filosofia moderna e filosofia dei tempi*, in *Il carattere della filosofia moderna*, Bari, 1941, pp. 261-266.

clear understanding which they preserve, that even if all in this world does not take the parts of truth, goodness and beauty, nevertheless nothing happens in the world in vain, individuals or groups spontaneously voice the words of Dante: that the just eyes of God are turned elsewhere, or that this is the preparation which in the infinite depth of His wisdom He is making for some good wholly hidden from our sight. Meanwhile, they cling more closely to the consciousness of man's mission and duty, the one force which, if he so wills it, never fails man, the one power which is the source of perpetual fresh encouragement and rejuvenation of spirit, so that he never despairs of life.

Duty always consists in reason, not in unreason, in the heart burning in the flame of humane ideals, of civilization, of liberty and of unwearied action. We must keep ourselves rational and alive because we are Christians, and deeply Christian because we are rational, as we have explained elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> Christianity and reason, even though now it may seem otherwise, can never be surpassed or out of date. Are they, then, few in number who hold to this faith, as is commonly asserted in order to spread discouragement? They may well be, even today, more numerous than is thought. This can be demonstrated by counting their representatives, and the veritable regiment of followers, in the various countries of Europe and America, and by observing their firm resistance and the comforting signs of awakening and revival. Again, these few or many may have secret allies unknown to them among their present foes, the foes being on their part discontented, restless and divided among themselves. For reason alone truly unites mankind, and outside reason there is nothing but the unstable interplay of imagination, caprice and passing interest.

These considerations which we have reasoned out comfort and inspire us to stand firm and to put forth every effort in defence of such a cause, the sole cause for which it is lovely to live and die.

<sup>1</sup>*Why we cannot but call ourselves Christians*, 1942, now published in *Discorsi di varia filosofia*, Bari, 1945, vol. I.

AUGUSTUS JOHN  
FRAGMENT OF  
AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY—XIII

To Italy once more: this time I was accompanied by a wife and two daughters. A son, Romilly, was to join us at our destination, Ischia. He, in a fit of megalomania, had decided to cross the Alps and descend the Peninsula on foot. We, of course, travelled by train. Passing through Turin, we had time to get out and taste some of the excellent vermouth made there. Often in Paris I had called for a 'Turin': poured out recklessly, it was good value.

At Rome we broke the journey, putting up at a rather luxurious hotel, the Plaza, yielding as all agreed, the most exquisite honey in the world. A few days were spent in viewing the sights. While I admired the great biscuit-coloured city, I resented the scarcity of cafés with *terrasses* where one might conveniently lounge and watch the Roman scene. It was as bad as London with fewer climatic excuses. Have the French alone mastered the science of urban amenity? Hadrian's sunken forum revealed its miserable population of dead or dying cats: a fresh recruit was actually dropped into it out of a bag before our eyes! We ate wild strawberries at Nemi of the Golden Bough. The still dark pool at the bottom of the crater seemed to hold in solution the answer to a riddle as old as the hills around it. We emerged dumbfounded from the Vatican and the Sistine Chapel. After Raphael and Michelangelo, the aspect of modern life appeared remarkably mean and trivial. A feast at Alfredo's with a bottle of the 'old Falernian' or something like it, went far to restore our confidence. But now, impatient to get to our island and promising ourselves on returning, further hours in Rome, we pushed on to Naples. On descending here, I found myself minus my wallet. In the crowded disorder of the arrival some clever train-thieves had relieved me of it. But all was not lost. I found enough cash in my pocket for a cab. We drove to an imposing hotel overlooking the Bay and lived luxuriously on credit for a day or two till I got some more money and forgot the painful and humiliating experience. Wherever one might go in Naples, fat tenors would be sure to spring up and, barring our way,



sing inexorably '*Santa Lucia*'. Not until we discovered the Aquarium did we find safety, along with the Octopi, from these pests. One evening I came upon a singer of a different order. Of course it was *Santa Lucia* again, but this time the worn-out ditty, issuing from a boy's larynx, had somehow recovered all its youth and fire. The boy knew how to manage his beautiful voice and the effect was electrifying: there was no 'collection' this time.

The boat takes two or three hours to reach Ischia, touching at several points on the way. Passing the island of Procida with its long façade of tinted houses along the quay under the shadow of a precariously perched fortress, we stopped at last at the town of Ischia. The great rock of the Castello standing detached from the island rears itself loftily in true Salvatore Rosa style and is crowned with the remains of a castle and an old convent. Mounting by means of a steep road tunnelled in part through the rock itself, we arrive at the summit with its formidable towers vertiginously balanced over the gulf. As we explored the ruins, our attention was drawn to a sombre chamber noteworthy as a memorial of mediæval piety. It was furnished with a series of stone armchairs standing against the walls and designed, as much for comfort as the immediate requirements of sanitation. Here the older nuns were accommodated when their hour drew near and left naked to await release from life's bondage. One stark skeleton still held its place in quiet dignity but wearing a smile, I thought, a little forced and ceremonious. In an adjacent cell a pile of inarticulate and anonymous bones had been stored against future reassortment at the summons of the Last Trump.

The house of Vittoria Colonna in a suburb of the town shows paintings which have been attributed to that lady's devoted sonneteer, Michelangelo. They consist of decorations, borders and panels on a small scale indeed but displaying even in their present fragmentary state colourable evidence of the master's hand. The tall, plain, solidly built mansion was now tenanted by swarms of the poorest people.

As, continuing our voyage, we skirted the shores of the island, the outskirts of the town gave place to groves of umbrageous stone-pines, followed by stretches of featureless wooded country where I sought anxiously but in vain for a pictorial motif. Although I have forgotten the name of the spot at which we disembarked (unless it were *Lacco Ameno*) its fringe of feathery

tamarisks sufficiently distinguishes it. Romilly met us there, rather tired after his walk. Our destined bungalow or hut proved a sad disappointment. Perched against the cliff of a little cove, it lacked both space and light and was only rich in fleas. True, the beach below boasted an antique bath, provided by Nature with a constant supply of hot water from Vesuvius. But in spite of this amenity a mood of deep depression succeeded the already fading hopes of our landing: it was obvious that this place was of no use to us: we would have to seek further.

The next town along the coast, and the last, Forio, might offer possibilities. Accordingly we set forth to investigate. Forio turned out to be charming. It possessed a Saracen tower, a restaurant, a little harbour, a beautiful stretch of sand and, for a background, the cone of Epomeo, a volcano now happily extinct, though, as living memory attested, still capable of subterranean and disastrous upheavals. To crown all, a suitable dwelling, raised above vineyards by the sea, was at our disposal. It wasn't long then before we were installed in the *Villa Calice*, about a mile from the town. Asunta and Simonello, our domestics from the former place, continued to attend on us here. We had made the acquaintance of a compatriot, the elegant Countess Stead and her family, consisting of two fair daughters, Cleves and Pita, and their amphibious brother, Michael. These new friends did much to make our sojourn memorable. Their garden of oleander, nespoli, quince, orange, lemon and pepper trees contributed greatly, with the addition of a bottle of *Strega*, towards our surrender to the spirit of the place. Indeed, at night, when the moon shone, as it generally did, to add a further touch of magic to this environment, resistance had been folly. Some hold Ischia to be the island where Queen Calypso constrained Ulysses to pass a protracted holiday in her society. I see no reason to dispute this theory.

We were presently joined by an English friend, Jim Barnes, who was accompanied by a distinguished cleric, Monsignore McShane. Barnes, though at the time of undecided ambitions, was never in doubt of the brilliant career which must surely lie before him. He was destined in fact, as it turned out, to become Mussolini's 'Lord Haw-Haw', but has not been heard of lately. McShane, in spite of his high rank in the Church (and he was said to be in the running for the Hat) put on no airs of importance,

but his easy good-humour in no way compromised the essential dignity of his character. Referring to our common friend, Evan Morgan, now Viscount Tredegar, who recently had been received into the Roman Catholic Faith, and with the *trop de zèle* of a proselyte affected an almost Pope-like piety, McShane remarked rather bluntly that for his part he 'couldn't stand these damned converts'. They concerned themselves over-much, he said, with the frills and formalities of religious practice, which for him, a native Catholic, meant only a necessary though boring discipline. The Monsignore was a welcome addition to our bathing parties. For him, gaiety, good living and virtue weren't in the least incompatible. Bathing took up half our time. I used to get the Stead girls to sit to me while their mother busied herself with the restoration of the ruined monastery of San Francesco nearby. When T. W. Earp came to stay with us, he too was subjected to the same tyranny. With a poet's precision Tommy entitled the result of my effort, 'Sea, Wine and Onions'; for there was something of all three in the holiday complexion I had attempted to record. On occasional excursions to Naples in the company of this inveterate noctambulist our course led us inevitably to the cavernous resorts of the Neapolitan underworld; yet in those cut-throat dens we came to no harm. But we were safer in Ischia. Apart from drowning, life on the island presented few risks. As for the were-wolves reported to range the mountain, they left us alone. A closer menace came from the Corporate State. A concert being advertised to take place, we decided to attend it. We had heard the peasants in the fields singing their ditties in the style of a more primitive *Flamenco*. We hoped to hear more of these airs, which recalled the Moorish occupation. No such luck. The programme consisted entirely of recitations with *Italia* as the unvarying theme. The effect was inexpressibly boring, and we crept away at last, leaving some local aspirant to struggle with D'Annunzio's periods in an ecstasy of prescribed patriotic fervour.

When the time came to depart, we left behind with regret the contents of our cellar, which still comprised a considerable store of the excellent wine for which Ischia is noted. This we thoughtlessly bestowed on our servant Simonello. As a result he was reported later to have passed about three weeks in a state of constant vinous exaltation, achieving thus a celebrity to which neither his natural parts nor social circumstances had warranted.

As planned, a few more days were spent at Rome. I found our friend Evan Morgan installed in the *Collegio Beda*, engaged in bedecking a shrine to the memory of his beautiful and unfortunate sister, Gwyneth. We enjoyed the hospitality of the Collegio one evening, though the sumptuous fare proved too much for the daughters, who in some distress, half way through dinner, had to be led back to the hotel by Jim Barnes. This ardent Fascist had been in communication with Mussolini with a view to arranging a sitting but as the Duce was suffering from an indisposition at the time, he was spared this trouble and risk.

On our return journey, disembarking at Dover, we were moved to laughter (rather than tears) by the aspect of the suburbs of the town. The rows of familiar little brick houses, so typical of modern England, owing nothing to the example of tradition or the restraints of taste, illustrated both the architectural fancies of the speculative builder and the predicament of his tenants, compelled by interest or necessity to occupy these quaint castelettes of independence and ease while gripped fast in the tentacles of a monstrous and predatory financial octopus. The latter encumbrance, though it may impede their faculty of movement and growth, is recognized as an inevitable adjunct of human destiny akin to Divine Law, and so to be accepted without question. It is, after all, one form of Security and with all its drawbacks in no way affects the claim of the occupants to a Briton's heritage of Freedom or hypothecates the pride, valour and tenacity of the bull-dog breed. We are now faced with a gigantic programme of State housing. Millions of prefabricated bungalows are to be spawned over the country. Neatly constructed of steel they will be of an even more exiguous, though happily less ornate pattern than distinguishes those we have been considering. Their metallic uniformity will correspond in no way to the variations of local character nor reflect with advantage the diversity of their natural environment. It may be calculated that the heroes they are designed to shelter will tend to conform to a similar monotony of outline, and the quality of their thought, feelings and behaviour achieve in time an equally convenient standard of insignificance; convenient, that is, from the point of view of the innumerable officials whose business it will be, under the central Bureau, to run the super-servile State of the future.

A depressing prospect! I prefer to take refuge in Charles

Fourier's Utopia. Let us visit it. Here we are in the Age of 'Harmony' announced by the inspired commercial traveller of the eighteen-forties, which is to supersede 'Civilization', even as the latter had replaced 'Barbarism'. The social unit is the 'Phalanstery'; we will call on one of these imaginary institutions; reconstructing it as closely as may be to the inventor's design but adding as we are free to do, some touches of our own. Fourier had elaborated the constitution and working of his Society to the last detail. With all his fundamental sound sense there appears sometimes in his speculations a note of extravagance; as when, for instance, he envisages the harnessing of the Aurora Borealis, with the conversion of its light into heat effecting such an amelioration of the climate of the Arctic regions as to render them pre-eminently suitable for market-gardening. Here I am left behind; and you . . . ? Some would disagree with his denigration of bread as an article of diet. Fourier found it unpalatable; besides which, the cultivation of wheat, he argued, took up far too much space, time and trouble. He advocated fruit and vegetables with the addition of fish and the products of the chase. But milk of course was available and no doubt beef and mutton. As we approach our objective the Phalanstery appears in the middle distance rising on an eminence like a little Attic town. Surrounded by lesser buildings within the containing wall, the taller spires and towers even remind me a little of the Pope's palace at Avignon. The line of the horizon is broken by the distant silhouettes of more than one such landmark. We pass a troupe of magnificent children amusing themselves at their task of scavenging and mending the road. These are the 'Petites Hordes' (to quote an example of Fourier's absurd nomenclature) and are given great honour. By the river a band of Nomads have pitched their tents. In an unknown tongue they pass derisory comments on our appearance.

Crossing a bridge we penetrate the enclosure by a nobly planned gateway bearing sculpture of arresting and unfamiliar quality. The outer wall appears to serve no military purpose but merely confines the Phalanstery within the bounds of expansion prescribed by the philosopher. Fourier realized the truth that greatness flourishes in inverse ratio to the size of the community, and limited his population to not more than 1,700. A superfluity would set forth to found a new Phalanstery of their own. Thus



the whole land becomes punctuated with these ganglions of human activity, between which there will be constant inter-play and traffic. Proceeding through the glass-covered, air-conditioned and impeccably clean streets we arrive at the Central Place. Under its tall trees numbers of people are taking the air. Many sit before the taverns or under the arcades which alternate between the loftier façades of Church, Opera-house, University, Hall of Exchange, Theatre, Library and other communal buildings. Although all is obviously of recent date with no sign of dilapidation, a mysterious air of antiquity pervades the whole. It is as if some Mycenaean or Tia Huanacan city had come to life again! Raised in the centre a great stone figure of a woman gazes innocently at the sun. This must be the Earth-Mother by the twentieth century statuary, Henry Moore. We notice no signs of indigence, but Fourier was no leveller and admitted degrees of function and dignity in his world. All, even the humblest, are shareholders in the common stock. The Phalanstery in a literal sense belongs to all who belong to it. . . . In 'Civilization' the Family was held to be the bed-rock of society. Not so in 'Harmony'. It was observed that this institution instead of welding society together in common endeavour, was on the contrary a fundamental cause of its disruption. The interests of the Family were seen to supplant those of the community as a whole giving rise to class-cleavage, simony, nepotism, graft, cant, snobbery and finally war. With all its holy traditions it tends to become an important adjunct of big business with prostitution as its necessary concomitant.

Fourier seems to have been blind to the advantages of the 'Civilization' he so despised. The grace, culture, dignity, leisure, comfort, not to say luxury, which distinguished at any rate its upper strata were apparently unperceived by him; as a poor man it is true he could not perhaps have been personally familiar with this side of the picture; but surely he must have read about it! By the medium of the cheapest literature even the lowly charwoman is usually well posted in the affairs of her betters, and in our Democracy the Almanach de Gotha is accessible to all. But no, the matrimonial system of our day has been eliminated together with the Ruling Class. The free association of the sexes which has taken the former's place draws upon itself no shade of disrepute and it is surprising that these natural unions, without the sanctions of Religion or the constraints of Law, are often

observed to be of remarkable durability and that without the collusion of the Brothel, a convenience unknown in the Phalanstery! As for the Ruling Class, there doesn't appear to be one; for the Philosopher, Poet, Man of Science, Artist or Saint who rank highest in popular esteem, wield no power other than moral and intellectual.

Some individuals too of less lofty profession exercise an almost equal authority in private or in the council chamber. A certain boot-maker, I was told, was constantly resorted to by the people for his sound judgement and advice. But cobblers always have been noted for their sagacity. We noticed no soldiers about the place and not a single policeman. 'What about your frontiers,' I asked our guide, 'how are they guarded?' 'Frontiers?' he repeated stupidly, 'frontiers? but there aren't any' . . . In this somewhat primitive community money is not regarded as wealth. It is merely used as a means of facilitating exchange or barter and by applying at the Bank you can have as much as you like. It is in great request with the children however who use it as counters in a game called 'Business' or 'Beggar my Neighbour'. Archæologists say that this game, like 'Hop-Scotch', is of very ancient origin.

And now we notice a great stir and hubbub in the place. In every direction people are issuing from their workshops and factories, their studios and magazines and are hastening to the gardens and orchards which stretch far beyond the circumference of the Phalanstery. It is the hour when work is changed. In many cases a man has two or three separate avocations which he practices in rotation. By this system monotony and rustiness are avoided. Above all, work on the land at regular intervals is found especially refreshing and beneficial. But play takes up a considerable portion of the time-table of the Phalansterians for they contrive to have plenty of leisure. Dancing of a communal and ritual character is much practised. Music, the Ballet and the Theatre all flourish exceedingly and in the Cathedral the liturgies of Birth, Love and Death are celebrated with a splendour and solemnity unknown to us. The Festivals of the Sun, Moon and other luminaries which are worshipped with many other natural objects as types of Ultimate Reality, afford scope for pageantry and song of a highly picturesque and exhilarating nature. On these occasions a deal of buffoonery and horse-play is indulged

in. I asked somebody, 'Didn't they ever have rows, quarrels?' 'O, yes,' he replied, 'now and then, but if people want to fight there's always the Ring down there', pointing to the Stadium by the river.

As we continued our explorations we came upon a small building with a very big window giving on a garden. Here was seated a venerable patriarch in a blouse engaged in painting the figure of a young woman posed under a tree. 'Our oldest inhabitant,' said the guide, tapping his forehead significantly. One of our party remarked that the artist looked like a revised and much improved edition of myself. I thanked him for the compliment and passed on.

Upon taking our leave at the Gate, the same witty fellow made a final inquiry: 'And how are you represented in the central legislature or Governing Body of the State; by a delegate, deputy or member from each Phalanstery or from a group of Phalansteries?' Our cicerone was evidently much shocked. 'We mind our own business,' he murmured; then, pointing to an inscription over the archway, vanished. The inscription, in letters of gold, was to this effect: '*When the State ceaseth, look my brothers, do you not see the Rainbows and the Bridges of the Beyond!*'



My friend Princess Eugene Murat, having taken a villa at St. Maxime, a place then unknown to me, invited me to come for a stay. The Mediterranean is irresistible, and when I was assured that this seaside resort was within easy reach of Toulon, which I had already visited and found much to my taste, I decided, though not without some misgiving, to fall in with the plan. It provided, I thought, fresh opportunities for painting, with the water-front of the port as my particular objective.

Descending from the train at St. Raphael, a short drive takes one to St. Maxime. The villa *Sourire d'Avril* was situated back of the little town and was approached by a steep and winding flight of steps. As I mounted these my spirits sank correspondingly: the appearance of the villa together with what I had seen of the town overcame me with a sense of complete futility. Was it for this I had journeyed so far? Had not my instincts sounded a warning? Still, there was Toulon at hand. The genial Princess did her utmost to restore my confidence, but it was obvious

I could never work at *Sourire d'Avril* nor could I discover anything to excite me in the whole of St. Maxime, though I explored it thoroughly; and, finally, I had been misled as regards Toulon: it turned out to be some hours' journey in a car. Why had I not looked at the map?

However, we drove there one day and whilst my hostess performed certain mysterious commissions, I had time for a hurried glimpse of the quays before returning. Here was the popular life and colour and the old traffic of the sea I loved to watch.

The *Hotel du Port et des Negociants* still opened its doors alluringly and I wished I was staying under its roof again.

When we made an expedition to St. Tropez I cursed myself for not having discovered this place before. It was then an ideal spot for a painter, but has since been invaded by the bourgeois, and a serried row of motor cars parked on the quays now completely excludes a sight of the harbour and shipping.

One day while strolling on the front at St. Maxime I caught sight of two figures which, almost unbelievably, belonged to friends of mine. They were in fact the musician, E. J. Moeran, and Miss Eileen Hawthorne. What had brought them here I couldn't imagine. Was it possible that they found themselves unable to exist without my company? I should have thought that Eileen, at any rate, had had more than enough of it in the past. At any rate, they greeted me with joyous cries of recognition. As we sat in a café I couldn't discover that they had any further plans, so with some hesitation I invited them to the villa. Violette Murat and I were running in to Toulon that day, and we took the newcomers with us. On the return journey Miss Hawthorne displayed signs of hysteria: perhaps she had taken something which had disagreed with her—her behaviour, at any rate, became unaccountable and disturbing. Violette, her patience exhausted, stopped the car and took a seat, more peacefully, beside her chauffeur. On arriving home, the composer, absenting himself for a space, presented a dreadful spectacle on returning: his face was covered with blood! In the dark he had fallen down—or up—the dangerous steps I have mentioned, seriously damaging his face. This was too much for the Princess. Her wrath overflowed, and the unfortunate man was sent to bed without ceremony. Next morning our hostess showed herself in a more magnanimous and gayer mood. Eileen, on rising, found her

parading the salon while singing the merry ballad, 'What shall we do with a drunken sailor?' which she had learnt from that fount of melody, Nina Hamnett. She did more: sacrificing a black silk scarf she bound up Moeran's face with great tenderness and good nature and deputed her chauffeur to drive us in to St. Raphael, where I was to put her two uninvited guests on a train. This I did. It was a sad business, for my friends showed every sign of depression on parting; and yet, in spite of sharing their gloom, I returned to the villa with some relief.

As the days succeeded each other profitlessly in this unsuitable pleasance, I must have betrayed signs of boredom. Violette, thinking to distract me, proposed an excursion to Monte Carlo. I was all for it, and we set out, looking in on the way on François de Gouy d'Arcy and Russell Greely at their château near Grasse, where we enjoyed a supremely good lunch, and arrived at 'Monte' rather late. The place was full to overflowing, but the Princess, with her superior energy and *savoir-faire*, taking charge of the situation, found shelter for us at last in an hotel called, I think, Grand Hotel de la Russie. Meanwhile, I had been exploring on my own. I had come across several friends—Tony Gandarillas, Lord Alington, Christopher Wood, and Louis Coatelen of 'Sunbeam' fame. Lastly, I made the acquaintance of a country-woman. Her name was Myfanwy Llewellyn. Astonished and delighted by these mellifluous syllables which designated a native of Merioneth (here was a chance to improve my Welsh!), I proposed to meet her next day, and returned to the hotel.

The quarters the Princess had obtained were sufficient, if not exactly roomy. Next day Mrs. Reginald Fellowes drove us out to her palatial house on Cap Martin, where a room was always to be kept at the disposal of my companion. Daisy Fellowes' beauty, enhanced by French breeding and American chic, suggested a Sieneese Madonna, who had submitted, with infinite grace, to the attentions of a *modiste* of genius. She gave me some—all too few—sittings later.

As for gambling, I made a few pounds at the tables, but as some friend was always at hand to borrow my winnings, I came out of the Casino as poor as I went in. As sensitive as a wild boar in captivity, I was beginning to feel rather than think that my frequent presence in Violette's company might be misconstrued: I was finding myself too often at her side in a society

to which I was a stranger. I had nothing in common with these chance acquaintances; their gossip didn't interest me nor did I relish the distinction of affording them a fresh subject for speculation. I was caught, if you like, but by no means tamed. My powers of movement were still unhampered, and my absences became more and more protracted and unaccountable. The truth is, I found Myfanwy to be in every way sympathetic: I conceived a great esteem for her. Her quiet gaiety and good nature joined to an Homeric style of beauty, strangely out of place in this fashionable fun-city, acted like a magical spell to restore me to myself and revive my languishing sense of freedom, even though it might be at the expense of good manners. My negligence as to the latter was born in upon me when on returning to the hotel one day I found the Princess gone and my baggage with her! No message explained this move. What was I to do? The answer was easy: Tony Gandarillas and Kit Wood were staying at the Bristol, an hotel overlooking the old harbour of the Condamine. I went there: it was a change for the better: the view outside was admirable. As for my immediate needs, Napier Alington put his supply of shirts at my disposal. Louis Coatelen, too, couldn't have been more serviceable, and Tony and Kit welcomed me to their hotel; but this situation could not be prolonged. My suitcase was probably by now at St. Maxime; my painting materials certainly had been left there; besides, I had a real regard for Violette Murat and, in spite of her desertion, felt I owed her a gesture. I took a taxi to St. Maxime: this was the longest taxi-drive in my experience. Back in *Sourire d'Avril* I fell ill with mysterious pains and had to lie up for a few days. The Princess and Iris Coatelen ministered to my needs like a couple of angels. Once cured, I was overcome with nostalgia and a desire to work. I bade good-bye to my good friends and left—for Martigues.

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The facility with which many artistic explorers, on arriving at an entirely new and unaccustomed scene, set to work at once in cold blood and without a moment's hesitation is astonishing; but I cannot say I envy them, for it implies, in my opinion, a lack of sensibility. Without long study, trial and many a failure, the secrets of Nature are apt to be withheld. As with a beautiful woman, courtship, not violence, wins the prize, and apparently



impudence is no safe prelude to performance. The industry of some of our Martigues visitors only resulted in efforts which might have been equally abortive in Oklahoma, Birmingham or Sydney. By staying at home much expense and trouble would have been avoided: the Étang de Berre remained unsubjected and serene at the hands of these light-hearted invaders.

Not so when it came to the exigencies of big business or war. An enormous digue was constructed to prolong a channel connecting Marseilles with the Étang by a tunnel and thence skirting the shores, to Martigues, the Caronte and the mouths of the Rhône. It is certainly no improvement, being constructed of rough, unhewn blocks of stone, and we were told the gigantic enterprise was a failure, even for practical purposes. A French artist living in the next village of La Méde said, for his part, he could ignore it: '*Un coup de brosse et ça n'existe plus*'—but I found its ugly outline disturbing.

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Martigues, in submission to the march of progress as conceived by business men or crooks, began to show signs of creeping industrialism; the air of innocence which this little republic of fishermen once wore was being replaced by the marks of anxiety, corruption and toil. There are more cafés opened in the Cours de la République and more motor cars parked under its plane trees, but there is less gaiety and good humour. The young people no longer dance in the Café du Commerce on Sunday nights; the new bascule bridge, though serving its purpose, leaves me emotionally unmoved. Before and during these changes we used to visit the place regularly. My family, reinforced by two incomparable daughters, now occupied the larger portion of the Villa Ste. Anne. Bazin had died and Mlle. Bazin had accepted the position of governess. On Sunday evenings, drawn as if by some magical spell, the two girls would descend to join the *Cercle Cupidon* and dance to their hearts' content while I sat in a corner to watch the lively scene with a glass of *marc-cassis* at my elbow. The local youths and maidens always behaved with that cheerful correctitude which appears to be a secret belonging peculiarly to royalty and the lower middle-classes. The music, supplied by voluntary effort, made up in vigour what it lacked in virtuosity. I found in my family the models

I needed, and would pose them in a setting of olive or pine trees, the speckled aromatic hills and, above all, against the blue Étang bordered by distant amethyst cliffs.

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J. D. Innes had been a more recent student at the Slade than I. We became very friendly in London before passing a considerable time together in Wales and elsewhere. His early painting reflects his admiration for Wilson Steer. Later it took on a more poetic and emotional colouring and a growing accentuation and delight in pattern compensated to some extent for his weak draughtsmanship. He himself cut an arresting figure: a Quaker hat, coloured silk scarf and long black overcoat set off features of a slightly cadaverous cast with glittering black eyes, wide sardonic mouth, prominent nose, and a large bony forehead invaded by streaks of thin black hair. He carried a Malacca cane with a gold top and spoke with a heavy English accent which now and then betrayed an agreeable Welsh sub-stratum.

He had spoken to me of an inn he had discovered in North Wales situated in the Arenig valley, north of Bala, and proposed that I should join him there some time. On finding myself free, I went to pick him up at Llanelly, his home town, where by some misunderstanding I expected to meet him, but found he had already left for the North. His parents made me welcome, and next day I took the train for Bala. Our meeting was cordial but yet, I felt, on his part a little reserved, as if he felt the scruples of a lover on introducing a friend to the object of his passion—in this case the mountain of Arenig, which he regarded, and with some reason, as his property. Had he not been the first to discover and paint it? Arenig, though not very lofty, has fine contours, and at some angles is sharply precipitous; its companion, Arenig-fach across the valley, presents a blunter profile.

The inn, Rhyd-y-fen, was excellently placed for our purposes, on the road which leads from Bala across the moors to Blaenau Festiniog. It was kept by a character called Washington Davies. He fed us on Welsh mutton. In the evenings, when moved to gaiety, he would execute Welsh jigs with great agility and precision, and was, in fact, the play-boy of the district. The slopes of Arenig-fach rose behind the inn, and beyond the little lake of Trewern were seen in the distance the peaks of Moelwyn. In the midst of the valley a rocky eminence offered, I thought, an

ideal site for a phalanstery, and I dreamt of erecting one there some day. Innes' activity was prodigious: he rarely returned at evening without a couple of panels completed. These, it is true, were rapidly done, but it often meant long expeditions over the moors in search of the magic moment of illumination snatched from the ever-changing procession of the clouds. Perhaps, as one pre-destined, he felt he must hasten to make, while there was yet time, these votive-offerings to the mountains he loved and, in religious faith, invest them with spirit, personality and power.

Though he made a show of ignoring his condition, he was already doomed. The disease which might have been extirpated earlier had established itself, and nothing could now arrest its inexorable progress.

In our search for some house or cottage where we might instal ourselves and work to better advantage, we came upon several lonely habitations ideally placed, which once would have served our purpose but, now in ruins, were impracticable. At last Innes discovered a cottage but three miles from the inn, which we decided to take. It stood on the slopes of the Migneint by the brook called Nant-ddu, and commanded a view of Arenig. We furnished it sparsely and returned to it the following year and yet again. One or two anecdotes will illustrate the pure romanticism of Dick Innes' nature. While staying with John Sampson at Bettws-gwergil-goch, Innes joined us, and one day he and I set out for the neighbouring town of Corwen. In the bar of an inn we came across a family of gypsies with whom we consorted. These were of the rare tribe of Florence. One of the young women was especially remarkable for her dark beauty, elegance and charm of manner. All gypsy girls are flirts, and this one, by name Udina, was no exception to the rule. Dick, uninured to gypsy wiles, was deeply moved. The family announced their departure the next day for Ruthin. At length, after visiting more than one hostelry, we, with reluctance, said goodnight and returned to Sampson's house. The next day Innes' absence was remarked. I made a good guess of his intentions. As it turned out, he had risen early and gone back to Corwen to rejoin the Florences, but finding them already decamped, had set out to overtake them on foot. On the outskirts of Ruthin, fainting with fatigue, to which his condition no doubt contributed, he had fallen by the roadside and was discovered in a state of complete

collapse by a good Samaritan, in the person of a gentleman of Ruthin who, rescuing him from this predicament, took him to his house and kept him there in bed for a few days till he was restored to comparative health. Alas! Udina was never seen again.

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Lilian Milsom was a protégé of Horace Cole, and was popularly known as 'Billy'. In the belief that she had a 'voice', Cole was having her trained as a singer. In due course she did appear, for a brief period, on the music-hall stage, where her performance, I thought, owed less to Art than to impudence. She was a pretty, good-natured girl of unstable affections, with an American accent contracted in Soho. Dick Innes became very *épris* of her, though, I think, his feelings were more altruistic than amorous. At this time he had become possessed of a caravan, bought from some gypsy, which was resting in the yard of an inn in the remote village of Penmachno. Burning with sentimental zeal for Billy's redemption and determined to extricate her from an existence in which the Café Royal occupied too great a share, he at last obtained her consent to accompany him to North Wales, where they would take to the road and travel the world together in healing contact with Nature and under the beneficent spell of his beloved hills. They were approaching their destination. Dick, greatly moved, pointed through the carriage window to the scene which now unfolded itself. 'Look, Billy, the mountains of Wales!' he cried; but Billy, immersed in her comic journal, refused to be interrupted. They reached Penmachno and spent several days in the inn. From time to time Dick proposed they should go round to the back and view the yellow ambulance which was to be their home, but Billy, with impatience, called for another whisky and soda. She failed to make the effort and shortly they returned to London and the Café Royal.

Some years later, being at Penmachno, I saw the van, or what was left of it. It had never been moved, and only the vestiges of its wheels protruded from the ground.

Returning from the Basses-Pyrénées and Collioure, where he had been working, Innes sent me word to meet him at Marseilles. I did so, and we arranged to go to St. Chamas, a place on the northern angle of the Étang de Berre, where already Dorelia and I had passed some months. The three of us installed ourselves in the Hotel Bozio. Innes, however, was feeling by now very ill,

and I advised him to return to England, which he did. I did not see more of him till I visited him several times at Brighton, with Horace Cole, who had always been a good friend of his: this must have been in 1914, for the war had just broken out and I remember our excitement over it and Innes' indifference: his mother was looking after him, and he took little interest in anything but his medicine: he had previously visited Morocco and the Canary Islands with Trelawney Dayrell Reed, but the state of his health made this expedition infructive, and he returned worse than ever. His mother having moved him to a nursing-home in Kent, again we went to see him, this time accompanied by Euphemia Lamb: the interview was painful; we left the two together: it was our last meeting. In the cairn on the summit of Arenig J. D. Innes had buried a silver casket containing certain intimate correspondence. I think he would like to have been laid beside this memorial of a constant dual passion.

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Derwent Lees owed much to the example of Innes; he discovered in his friend's approach to Nature a way of release from his Australian inhibitions, and with immense intelligence strove to adjust himself to this new outlook. To some extent he succeeded, but industry and calculation could not vie with the passionate flights of his, I must own, somewhat impatient original. In any case, he lacked the time to pursue his experiments far, for unfortunately he also succumbed to illness at a too early age.

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Another short-lived figure of this period, Rowley Smart, came to visit Alderney. He was a water-colour draughtsman and practised the old English style with some success. Following the method laid down by this tradition, he couldn't go far wrong, and his results were often pleasing. On the other hand, when it came to oil-painting, his success was less apparent. His weekend at Alderney was prolonged to about six months, and we were already tired of the company of this hairy and profane dwarf when I at last persuaded him to leave. He had exhausted us together with the pictorial possibilities of the district. However, during his stay he taught my son, Edwyn, the rules of his craft, to the advantage of the latter. We had made the acquaintance of a family up the road, called White. Major White was an eccentric but friendly character, and was never seen without a red waistcoat,

to judge by its appearance a family heirloom. Rowley and his eldest daughter formed a close attachment. She was a dark, handsome girl, while her red-headed sister was also attractive in a different and more robust style. One evening while visiting this family, Mrs. White insisted on her younger daughter disrobing. As she stood naked before me, her mother, removing her pipe, spat into the fire and remarked that 'her skin was as fair as a lady's'. So it was. I cannot forget this scene, and it only remains to paint it. As I left the house, profoundly impressed, I made a vow to perfect my technique to that end, and am still engaged on the task. Upon Rowley's departure his dusky sweetheart, relying on his fidelity, bided her time in patience; but the fugitive water-colourist never returned, and Tihanna at last, being a sensible girl, omitting the classic ritual, did *not* throw herself into the neighbouring pond, but instead, realizing her lover's inadequacy, transferred her affections to, we will hope, a more satisfactory object.

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The main problem of an artist who sets out on a painting expedition in this country is to find somewhere where he can conveniently stay. Perhaps by nature less indifferent to his surroundings than others, his requirements, while exceptionally modest, are more difficult to satisfy. A room is needed to work in on rainy days; a simple whitewashed room, fairly lit and sparsely furnished in the plainest style; but where is such a thing to be found? The village inn may be perfectly situated and its bar satisfactory, but venture upstairs to view the accommodation offered there and you are likely to return, discouraged, to the bar, before moving on. The progressive degradation of popular taste in the last hundred years has now reached its nadir and has rendered travel a process of alternate elation and defeat. Who is content to sleep, let alone wake, amidst a clutter of mean junk? Even the walls, as a matter of course, have to be hideously 'papered'. The productions of local industry and craftsmanship which used to dignify the humblest cottage have been looted by the antique dealers and now are seldom seen outside museums, 'curiosity shops' or the houses of enlightened amateurs. They have been replaced by imported articles of imitation luxury turned out in monstrous centres of mass labour here or abroad. Having sold or been done out of their birthright, the people, habituated to

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the ensuing squalour, end, like drug-fiends, by craving for it. Such are the blessings conferred by the reign of Mammon on this too green but not unpleasant land.

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Our visitors to Alderney Manor included Iris Tree, an American friend Morley Kennerly; the painter Viola (Jo) Jones, and Dr. Jan Sliwinski, Polish musician and bibliophile—perhaps I should add, poet, for he has made admirable translations from Polish folksongs. Gifted with a superb voice, he used it as an artist, and his singing moved me to my marrow. To appreciate Chopin fully, it is perhaps necessary to have known Jan Sliwinski. Thanks to his knowledgeable intervention some order was brought into the confusion of my books, and in many another way he made himself serviceable; for this man is never happy except when doing good turns for others. Such a disposition may not lead to riches, but this would hardly concern the possessor of a heart of gold.

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For some while a person named Guy Allen obtained a footing in our household. By dint of assiduity and a capacity for running errands, attending to the telephone and such chores, he enlisted our good will and tolerance, though it wasn't long before I, for one, began to find his proximity irksome. The explanation of this spontaneous devotion to our interests was only revealed after his dismissal. It then came out that, having access to my studio at Mallord Street, this amateur had been quietly forming an immense collection of my works. The first intimation of this came from Miss Dorothy Warren, at that time running a picture gallery in Maddox Street. One day in the 'Eiffel Tower' she told me she had just seen a number of my drawings up for sale at Sotheby's. Surprised and puzzled, I went round to investigate. Sure enough, a wall full of my works confronted me, and a portfolio was also on view, filled with drawings. I recognized in these not only my handiwork but my property. I ventured to point this out to the titled auctioneer, who bridling, seemed to feel his honour brought into question, as in fact it was. The sale was just about to take place, and he persuaded me to let it proceed, after which I might take such steps as I thought fit. He then mounted the rostrum, and I left the building feeling sick. In spite of lodging a protest, I never saw these drawings again;

but now, apprized of further depredations, I consulted a lawyer, who getting busy, managed to retrieve about a hundred drawings and a panel from some obscure dealer in Brighton. Other packets had been planted elsewhere, but we failed to trace these. Guy Allen's collection must have been beyond comparison the most complete and representative in existence. What annoyed me was that, being possibly in a hurry, he had disposed of his acquisitions at ridiculously low prices. His sudden departure on a visit to the Continent without leaving an address prevented me from expressing my feelings in person.

I doubt, however, if this collector acquired as many of my drawings as I myself burnt or tore up: for from time to time, possessed by a demon of discontent, I have destroyed hundreds.

## MARGOT MOFFETT

# YOUNG IRISH PAINTERS

FIVE and a half years ago Eire locked up her artists and increased her export of graduates, technicians and unskilled labour. Here in Dublin in day-to-day life the effect on the community of this export of minds and hands trained to serve the common bondage of England and Eire has not been so evident as the effect of the locking-up process of the local artists and the new imports. These have been imports of real wealth: refugees. Those who have been refugees in the most profound sense are the artists—poets, painters, sculptors, architects.

There will be, no doubt, a general dispersal during the aftermath, but the work of these artists has certainly radiated a strong and, I am convinced, a lasting influence.

Although of the opinion that the economic circumstances of a period must not be subordinated in the making of even an intimate statement concerning that period, nevertheless, being quite incompetent to fill in the economic background to the story of Dublin in the war years, the following note may suffice. Add to a low standard of living a *laissez-faire* spirit, and divide by no effective control of the cost of everyday household commodities, and what have you?

It has been a rare experience to have lived these war years in Dublin, and to have lived them in the company of artists. We have witnessed, wondered at, and speculated on the fascination of this most lovable, most detestable, country. We have raged and fought, with paint, poems and perspectives, against the mental paralysis which threatens the New Ireland. A paralysis of conflict. In so far as I can see it, it is the dregs of one authoritarian culture—that of the Anglo-Irish—conflicting with the flotsam and jetsam of another such culture—the Church rather than the Faith. When, oh when, will the qualitative change in this conflict take place? There are moments when I wonder if it has begun.

During the first two or three years of the war it was possible to sense hysteria. The nation was thrown in on itself. There was no escape from this intensification of insularity: water on one side, blood on the other. The strange imports and those of us who became friendly with them, came in for more than a fair share of the mass nervousness. But eventually we all shook down.

To me the most interesting thing about the modern movement in the plastic arts in Eire is the fact that it reflects current trends in European art which, if known, were not absorbed by even the intellectual minority in Dublin, and certainly not in any way publicized. By 1939 the traditional cultural time-lag in Ireland was displayed, in the plastic arts, by a gap so wide as to stretch from early Gleizes to the romantic movement developing just now.

Amidst storms of protest from all sections, Mainie Jellett and Evie Hone, on their return to Dublin from the studio of Gleizes in the middle 'twenties, continued to paint in modified versions of their master. Mainie Jellett persevered in a severely abstract manner choosing, more often than not, religious themes. She has just died. She was a kindly and reliable friend of all young, forward-looking artists.

Evie Hone's best work is, I feel, her stained glass. She is, I imagine, better known in England and wherever modern stained glass is appreciated, than she is in Eire. Barely a handful of the clergy sense the strength and purity of her form and colour. Rouault's influence has also been of considerable importance to her work.

These two artists introduced a revolutionary element into Irish art. With their cubist symbols they did the spade work for the group of modern artists now in Ireland, in so far as public

awareness is concerned. And now there does seem to be an increasing public awareness of the plastic arts. Naturally, as yet, the critical ability of most of those organizing this 'awareness' leaves much to be desired. But it is possible for me to feel convinced that something is happening; ideas are on the march.

Believing, as I do, in the immense power for creative good that a few individuals of responsibility and initiative may wield within a community, in spite of unfavourable conditions, it is not altogether surprising that there should be a feeling of things happening in Dublin now. The consistent activities over a number of years of a few open-minded people, creative artists in the main, must surely create pressure which affects, at least, the intellectual minority of a community.

There is an exciting story waiting to be told about the cultural events in Dublin of the last two years. Intensified interest in concert music: début of Brian Boydell; young composer and conductor of high standards and adventurous spirit; ballet and grand opera companies abounding (quantity rather than quality, but they are creating new cultural demands). In the commercial theatre—staleness (in ideas rather than in receipts), but the little New Theatre Group continues, in spite of periodical internal upheavals, to produce privately, *Odets*, *O'Neill*, *Saroyan*, *Strindberg* and such. And cinema-mad Dublin is cultivating a taste for continental films.

Poetry. The editor of *The Bell* (our only claim to contemporary intellectual magazine literature) has recently said: 'Poetry in Ireland has declined in volume and quality. Yeats, Moore, Joyce, Shan Bullock, MacKenna, Gregory, AE, Higgins have all gone. No young men are appearing.' This I would respectfully present to you as being absolutely untrue. There is a small, but spiritually vital, group of young poets, developing with a full awareness of their inheritance, and passionately alive to the future, which is the present, which is the past. Some of these poets have Ulster for their background—*Rodgers*, *Hewitt*, *Craig*, *Greacen*, to name only those that come to mind as I write. The South has *Nicholls*, *Iremonger*, *Kavanagh* and others. Modest publications of work are continually appearing, most recent of which is *On the Barricades*. *Greacen*, *Iremonger* and *Williamson* contribute, and are prefaced with: 'Its three authors give proof of a new vitality in Irish writing, a vitality the older generations will not acknowledge. Here they raise, and defend, their first barricades

against the low standards, facile half-truths and lack of integrity that have for too long rotted the Anglo-Irish.'

I understand that Faber is to publish in 1945 an anthology of modern poetry from Ireland.

The teachings of modern architecture and national planning are also adding to the cultural pressure. The greatest hindrance to a wider knowledge of new materials, new methods of construction and new-old forms, is found amongst the architects themselves. The R.I.B.A. may be dead from the neck up, but take a look at organized architecture in Eire. Negation.

The architectural school at University College, Dublin, shows tiny signs of new life. There is, also, a private architectural atelier developing under the guiding spirit of a Liverpool-trained, Irish architect and planner (Noel Moffett), where students, graduates and anyone interested forgather for tuition, discussion, inspiration, and building practice. Need I add that Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright, Gropius, Mumford, Gideon and the rest, have found another spiritual home.

The plastic arts are stimulating a greater interest than there has been for a very long time. Evidence of this is the increased number of exhibitions and the higher output of art publications, and the activities of rural galleries. It must be realized, however, that these activities are almost always presented with a complete lack of sophistication, which in itself is a good thing; but this very lack of sophistication is often harnessed to a narrow and uninformed control, a control which results from an intellectual conception of what is, and what is not, art, rather than from an intuitive sensibility. This latter discipline is the form of control advocated consistently by the group of artists of whom I shall write.

I have recently had the exciting privilege and pleasure of helping to organize the first complete statement of modern painting and sculpture, as it has developed in Eire since about 1936. The exhibition was held during the first three weeks in January 1944. It consisted of fifty-two paintings and four carvings worked by thirteen artists, of whom only five were non-Irish.

The main reason for organizing this exhibition was that it was felt that the forms and symbols, brought to Eire by the artists I have described as 'real wealth', had influenced a sufficient number of local artists (and influenced them positively) to justify the exhibition of a 'complete statement'. The pause before the taking of another step.

So far as I know there has not been in Dublin an art show run on similar lines. We took the long view on every possible occasion. We began by inviting Colin Middleton, the Ulster painter, to join with us, and represent modern painting in the North. His work, though exceedingly derivative, was in the spirit of our exhibition. But the material implications of Partition were too great to allow his work to reach us.

We risked all our security on the production of as fine a catalogue as we could produce. We considered this as a long-term investment.

In our minds, continually, was the realization of the fact that there was no one of integrity who was capable of doing one of the jobs of the art critics, that is, helping to form critical opinion against which the artists may measure themselves. So our exhibition and its attendant activities were designed to help stimulate critical and informed opinion; to help leaven the Irish capacity, of which G.B.S. has written, for polite, or more often crude self-conscious derision of cultural energy. Naturally, from our point of view, our thoughts turned to Herbert Read.

Forty-nine photographic reproductions were sent to Herbert Read, and I like to think that he was able to read into and between the lines of our correspondence and to sense the moral and æsthetic implications of our efforts. Be that as it may, he agreed to visit us, to open the exhibition, and to lecture. The British authorities, however, prevented this part of our programme from being carried out. One country's imports are not necessarily another country's exports.

The exhibition went ahead. It could have died quietly from this blow. But the situation was exploited whenever possible. Herbert Read wrote a fine introduction to our catalogue, and he wired us an opening message. His lecture script arrived in time to be read, on the appointed evening, to a large and sympathetic audience. This lecture was published in *HORIZON* in May 1944.

We had another successful public lecture in the last week of the exhibition. John Hewitt, young poet and assistant curator to the Belfast Museum and Art Gallery, spoke on 'The Adventure of Subjectivity'.

From the point of view of the artists the exhibition activities went from strength to strength. Even finance was reasonably satisfactory. We had the audacity to charge admission on the



opening afternoon and all through the period of the exhibition; our catalogue was sold at 2s. 6d. (half the cost price). These are not customary items or prices for Dublin art shows. But people came and paid. Subscriptions and guarantees from the artists and a very small band of not-very-well-off friends were our only security. Sales were good.

Illustrated here are four prints from the twelve reproductions in the catalogue.

The most easily recognizable influences to be noted in the exhibition as a whole were those of Klee, Miro, Picasso, Zadkine, Surrealism. The standard of technique and craftsmanship, and the quality of colour was very uneven. But where assurance was lacking there was always evident spontaneity of ideas.

There will be an opportunity to see some of the work of all but three of these artists in London in April and May. The exhibition will be held at the Arcade Gallery, 28 Old Bond Street.

Activities connected with art in Eire continue to increase and expand. Almost daily there is news in the Press of, perhaps, a new gallery in the country, or another one-man or mixed exhibition in Dublin. A recent event of great interest (sociological rather than strictly artistic) was the Loan Exhibition of Modern Continental art, and the organizers were the Friends of the National Collection. A great quantity of work was collected from all manner of people and places, a substantial proportion of which was mediocre. The term 'modern' in the title of the show was used to cover a period which stretched from Manet, Pissarro and Renoir to Picasso and other living experimental artists.

If it served no other purpose, the loan exhibition showed to a suspicious and loudly derisive public how very safe and how very dull modern art can be. But it undoubtedly had an encouraging effect on the younger creative artists, and the more thoughtful members of the public. And the secretary of the Friends of the National Collection has been able to report that the Exhibition was a box-office success; it showed a considerable profit and this without the help of sales.

To give further proof of increased interest in art in Eire I must mention briefly the work of the organization called the Irish Living Art Exhibition. A large exhibition under this ponderous title was held for the first time last year in a genteel attempt to form a *Salon des Refusés*. Only artists of Irish nationality could

exhibit. This year, being ashamed, I hope, of such a form of bias, the organizers have opened their doors to all. Amongst those whose work has been accepted are many of the artists I mentioned earlier, and also there is work from Henry Moore, Paul Nash, Graham Sutherland, Ben Nicholson, Julian Trevelyan, John Piper and others from England.

As long as we do not become too engrossed in all this respectability, Eire may some day feel unself-conscious enough to have pride in her artists, for their own sake.

J. D. SCOTT

## NOVELIST-PHILOSOPHERS

### IV—ANDRÉ GIDE

IN *Si le Grain ne Meurt* Gide tells us that when he was a little boy, another child used to come to play with him. The two children retired under the table, and his nurse supposed them to be playing, a supposition which they encouraged by rattling toys which they had there for the purpose. In fact, however, they were not playing with the toys; they were practising '*des mauvaises habitudes*'.

Gide's intention in recalling this incident, which he does at the outset of his autobiography, is, I take it, to direct his reader's attention upon all those disreputable incidents of childhood and adolescence which we prefer to forget and, by extension, upon the whole history of the personality, that history of tendencies which were restrained, differences that were reconciled, rebellions that were dissipated. These suppressed elements have in his eyes a formidable importance. In Gide's view, we are each of us like a ship sailing with a prize-crew and with the real crew prisoners in the hold. The prisoners are the incidents and the tendencies to which I have referred and the important point is that they are not thrown overboard, that they are always with us and that they are not merely a group of individuals but a crew, which is always capable of taking charge of the ship. This crew, disarmed and in irons as it may be, is in fact perpetually plotting for the day when some incident—a storm perhaps—will give it a chance

to break out. It is not, therefore, a mere collection of spiritual impedimenta which we have suppressed but what amounts to an entity, a personality, a true *alter ego*. What we have suppressed is in fact what we really are and the person that we appear to be is, in Gide's phrase, counterfeit. Thus, in the *Caves du Vatican*, the dialogue between Protos and Lafcadio —

— Des gens de la société, comme vous et moi, se doivent de vivre coutrefaits...

— Et quand il n'y aurait pas la société pour nous contraindre, ce groupe suffirait, de parents et d'amis auxquels nous ne savons pas consentir a déplaire. Ils opposent a notre sincerité incivile une image de nous, de laquelle nous ne sommes qu'à demi responsables, qui ne nous ressemble que fort peu, mais qu'il est indécent, je vous dis, de déborder. — It will be seen that in this passage Gide limits the effect of this process, this coining of bad money, to 'les gens de la société' and to children or adolescents, thus indicating that there are people who can escape its effects, or circumstances in which its force is reduced. Nevertheless, if it were not something which everyone feels, it would not be the great force in human life which it is.

In his Journals, and in his critical writing, Gide has a good deal to say about this ubiquitous pressure of convention. He repeats over and over again, in different words, Schopenhauer's dictum— 'we find, in fact, that most men's guiding star is the example of others; that their whole course of life, in great things and in small, comes in the end to be mere imitation . . .' As he puts it in his Journal, 'Certains êtres . . . s'imaginent aimer, haïr, souffrir; leur mort même est une imitation.' Gide shares, of course, the admiration which Schopenhauer expresses for La Rochefoucauld, and quotes from the *Maximes* 'Combien d'hommes n'auraient jamais connu l'amour s'ils n'avaient entendu parler de l'amour?' In fact he goes farther, for it is one of his arguments in *Corydon* that we are heterosexual largely because it is the convention of society that we should be so. Gide sees us, therefore, as inverted Pinocchios, as human beings who are trying to become marionettes, trying to fasten ourselves by as many strings as possible to Society. The marionettes are all the same, similarity is in fact their *raison d'être*. They acquire the same virtues in order to be fit for the same duties. Gide, however, in a famous passage in *Si le Grain ne Meurt*, describes how he formed the view that duty

is not the same for everyone. 'Je n'admettais plus que morales particulières,' he says, 'et présentant parfois des impératifs opposés. Je me persuadais que chaque être avait à jouer un rôle sur la terre, le sien précisément, et qui ne ressemblait à nulle autre; de sorte que tout effort pour se soumettre à une règle commune devenait à mes yeux trahison, oui trahison, et qui j'assimilais à ce grand péché contre l'Esprit "qui ne serait point pardonné" par quoi l'être particulier perdait sa signification précise, irremplaçable, sa "sauveur", qui ne pouvait lui être rendue.' The real personality is therefore—at least in the 'chosen'—always in revolt against the counterfeit personality. It is not responsive to the strings which move the marionette; it has its own quite different gestures. The submerged personality has other aims than the public personality, and those aims are exclusive. Between the two personalities there is an invincible antagonism. It is not difficult to hear, in the passage which I have quoted, a muted and perhaps subtly distorted echo of the big guns of Nietzsche. 'To create itself freedom, and to give a holy Nay even unto duty.'

It is, of course, to Nietzsche that Gide turns most frequently in acknowledgment, and the psychology of his character owes a great deal to Nietzsche. Lafcadio, for instance, is the Nietzschean hero—'courageous, unconcerned, ironical, coercive'. And after Nietzsche, Blake. Gide translated the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and in his book on Dostoevsky he writes about Blake at some length. *The Proverbs of Hell* seem indeed to run under the foundations of Gide's bivalent character and art. What Gide found in Nietzsche and Blake was a conception of the suppressed self, of the double nature of man, which enabled him to grasp the nature of his own experience and to impose its form upon life.

These ideas, as explicitly stated in the passage I have quoted from *Si le Grain ne Meurt*, provide the material for Gide's novels, and each of the novels is a variation on this theme of the true self and the false, of Appearance and Reality—'la lutte entre les faits proposés par la réalité et la réalité idéale' as it is put in *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*. Their relative success can to some extent be equated with the actuality which this struggle achieves in each of them. Thus in *Isabelle* the young novelist, in reconstructing certain past events in his imagination, moulds them in his own conventionally romantic view of life, and turns the real Isabelle,

the selfish, commonplace bourgeoisie, into a heroine. We see her character, until the climax of the novel, only through the eyes of the hero, that is to say through the distorting, 'idealizing' lenses of convention, and the climax consists precisely in the clash in the young novelist's mind between the ideal personality which he has imagined and which is counterfeit because it is he who has imagined it and the real person whom he finally meets.

Again, in *La Porte Etroite*, Alissa deliberately frustrates her sexual instincts in order to ensure that her soul, and that Jerome's soul, shall be saved. She allows herself to conform to an imposed ideal of conduct, and suppresses that ideal of conduct which should flower from the personality. All this we see through the eyes of her lover, Jerome, and only in the last pages of the novel, when we read the diary which she kept before her death, do we learn of her sense of bewilderment, her realization that she has perverted the whole course of her life and that, as a result of her failure to remain true to her real self, she has not only lost Jerome but has committed the unforgivable sin and is abandoned by God.

In the first part of *L'Ecole des Femmes* we see Robert through the eyes of his fiancée, an impressionable young girl who adores him. In the second part, twenty years later, we see him as the passage of time has revealed him to Eveline, when she has 'seen through him'. But she finds that she has not the strength to be unfaithful to the situation of twenty years before; their love is based on a lie, but it has acquired an immense inertia; in the end it is stronger than the truth and Eveline finds that she must continue to imbue Appearance with Reality.

All these three novels are very short, and each has the concentrated impact of an anecdote. They have the impressive brilliance of a bold and lucid pencil sketch, but they lack power and depth.

Gide's great comic novel, the *Caves du Vatican*, like the works to which I have already referred, is concerned with the same theme of Appearance and Reality, but unlike them it is a long work, in which the theme is worked out in a number of plots, sub-plots and incidents, which interlock and complicate one another. The main story is of an organization of tricksters ('Les Mille-Pattes') of the amateur, quasi-criminal, quasi-adventurer type, who tell their victims that the Pope has been kidnapped by

Freemasons and a false Pope substituted for him, and then collect money for a Crusade to free the Pope. The kidnapping, they say, has been carried out with the connivance of certain high dignitaries of the Church; other high dignitaries are leaders of the Crusade, but so great is the power of the Freemasons, so numerous their spies, that the Cardinals who support the Crusade dare not make any open move: if even the kidnapping or the Crusade were referred to in their presence they would pretend not to understand. Thus the Mille-Pattes create a situation in which their victims don't know what to believe in any longer: when for instance the swindle is exposed in the Press, Protos (the leader of the Mille-Pattes) uses the exposure as evidence to convince Amédée Fleurissoire (the principal victim) that the 'secret' has 'leaked out' and that swindlers are taking advantage of it. Perhaps Amédée himself has stumbled on the 'truth' through the operation of those very miscreants! The climax of the plot comes when Anthime-Armand Dubois, the converted Freemason who has been left in poverty by the Church, on hearing that the Pope is not the 'real' Pope, bursts out—'Et qui me dira si Fleurissoire en arrivant au paradis n'y découvre pas tout de même que son bon Dieu non plus n'est pas *le vrai*?'

Into this principal plot is woven the story of Julius de Baraglioul, the writer, who, having written a book, *L'Air des Cimes*, about the career of his distinguished father, learns that his father is not the worthy dull creature whom he has depicted, that the biography is, in effect, a mere pious fiction. (The hero of the *Caves du Vatican*, Lafcadio, is in fact the bastard son of the old Ambassador.) At the end of the book Lafcadio and Julius's daughter Geneviève become lovers, and Geneviève finds that all her life with her family, with their opinions, ambitions and principles, has been a dream—a mediocre dream—which she has never taken seriously. This image of the dream is also used in a little incident when Lafcadio on a train journey sees an Italian lady, a widow, beautiful, dignified, a fit subject for his devotion . . . she makes a small indecorous gesture—'rêvait-il?'

This incident has a purpose in the plot also, it distracts Lafcadio's attention while a little piece of juggling is being carried out; it is in fact a part of the conjurer's patter without which the book could hardly get along at all, so full is it of conjuring and juggling; reading it is like a long session of watching a three-card trickster.



The comedy depends to some extent upon this contrivance of situations, but it hardly justifies all of them. So much more weight is borne by the surgically accurate observation, by the subtle insight, and by the disturbing power with which Gide evokes the irresistible attraction, the attraction which he feels more strongly than that of beauty, the attraction of youth. In the end we feel that if the elaborate machine has served its purpose, if everyone has been brought into a calculated juxtaposition at a given time, it is at the cost of some impediment of ratiocination in the creative process.

If therefore we wish to see the full realization of Gide's powers, we must look for a work, which I have already postulated will be an exposition of the theme of the true self and the false, having the impact of the shorter novels, but with the impact gaining weight from the rich diversity and greater scope of the *Caves du Vatican*. We are in fact looking for Gide's masterpiece, and we must consider *L'Immoraliste* and *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*.

In the Preface to *L'Immoraliste* Gide speaks of the 'problem' of his novel, and while he points out that the work of art is the solution of its own problem, he adumbrates the idea that a moral judgement is involved. There are, he says, 'ideas of urgent and general interest' in *L'Immoraliste*. Here I would like to say something about the source of these ideas. As I have suggested, all the evidence of acknowledgement would appear to indicate Nietzsche, but in reading Gide one learns to preserve a certain mistrust for the obvious, for the proclaimed. If *L'Immoraliste* is, as is commonly supposed, Nietzschean, it is at least equally possible to discern in it another influence, the influence which Sainte-Beuve called one of the two 'plus grands inspireurs de nos modernes'—the 'clandestine' influence—the influence of de Sade. It is indeed suggested by M. Mario Praz in his book *The Romantic Agony* that Gide's persecuted and unhappy heroines are descended from those of de Sade, but that, after all, if one accepts Sainte-Beuve's judgement, is not saying a great deal. M. Praz, however, does not approve of de Sade, and perhaps he did not wish to be disrespectful to a great contemporary. If we do not share his disapproval we need have no compunction about grouping Gide with Baudelaire and Flaubert as—not indeed a sadist—but a Sadist.

In *La Philosophie dans le Boudoir*, at the end of a long attack upon conventional morality, the objection is advanced—'je trouve

cependant quelques-uns de ces principes un peu dangereux'. To this, de Sade's hero, Dolmancé, replies—'Il n'y a de dangereux dans le monde que la pitié et la bienfaisance... Qu'un bon observateur s'avise de calculer tous les dangers de la pitié et qu'il les mette en parallèle avec ceux d'une fermeté soutenue, il verra si les premiers ne l'emportent pas.'

*L'Immoraliste* may be considered as an essay in calculating the dangers of pity. It is pity which desolates Michel's life; pity and well-doing are the fairy gold which turns into ashes, the 'cendre amer' of which Gide speaks in the Preface. At the outset of his narrative Michel recalls that he married Marceline, not because he loved her, but in order to please his dying father. So a note is struck: it is the first note of a theme. We learn that the Michel who marries Marceline, the young scholar who cherishes every fine sentiment, who knows nothing of himself, nothing of his friends, this Michel is 'counterfeit'—he is the mere creature of his mother's piety and of his father's passion for teaching, a ship sailing under a prize-crew. His feelings for Marceline were, Michel says, in words very like those of de Sade, 'tenderness, a sort of pity, and great esteem.' These are mere semblances of emotion, and on their honeymoon, without realizing it, Michel neglects his wife. He goes to find her to repair his neglect and is moved by her grace and gentleness, but immediately after this, they arrive in Tunis, and here for the first time Michel feels awakening within himself mysterious sensations and faculties, which are in fact emanations of his true personality, the personality which he later discovers, but which all the elements in his pious and scholarly upbringing have combined to suppress.

The two principles of Michel's character, the principle of pity and well-doing, and the principle which drives him to search for his true self—the Sadistic principle—thus emerge together in the narrative, and from now on they are in conflict. Upon this background of conflict between the true and the false, events and emotions form a pattern. Michel neglects his wife, and then is moved by a sense of guilt to treat her with tenderness and love. But the more he 'loves' Marceline, the more ardently his love is returned, the more he is irritated and wearied by a growing consciousness that his life is false and empty. And so he is driven to rebel against 'la pitié et la bienfaisance': he cannot tolerate the presence of Marceline, and on each of the critical occasions when

she needs him, first when her child is born dead, and then when she herself dies, Michel is not with her.

In the early stages of his relationship with Marceline, Michel does not appreciate the nature or the power of the sensations and faculties of which he had first become aware at Tunis. He feels however that they are being frustrated, and this sense of frustration increasingly possesses him, until, on the last night which he and Marceline spend in Biskra, he rushes out of the house to protest against the desolation of this existence, and to affirm against it the passion which he feels within himself. This crisis reveals to him finally that his life is a lie, and after it he sees clearly that the struggle between the true and the false personality must be decided. So he sets himself consciously to defeat the false personality; to strip away the accretions of knowledge, habit and convention, to dig into the past like the archæologist he is, and so to discover his primary and authentic self. This endeavour coincides with his recovery from a dangerous illness, and his body must be reconstituted with his soul. Thus he enters upon a struggle with the memory of his parents, with Protestantism and atheism, with his career and his income and his marriage and his acquaintances, his habits and prejudices, his possessions and his past, and with the treacherous pity which weakens him from within. The struggle is violent, brief, and in its immediate outcome, successful.

His physical recovery is complete when, Marceline having been put in danger by the action of a driver, he fights with the man, beats him, feels he could strangle him. 'Ah! quels regards après, et quels baisers nous échangeâmes!' and 'Ce fut cette nuit-là que je possédai Marceline.' This infusion of his true self into his relationship with Marceline brings him the only happiness he can find with her. But it is a climax, it cannot be repeated. Moreover, as it is based on a compromise with the principle of pity and well-doing, which is the only basis of his relationship, there is an anti-climax, a feeling of sadness which is really sexual guilt—'Je frissonnai, et, tout transi d'amour, de pitié, et de tendresse, je posai doucement entre ses yeux fermés le plus tendre, le plus amoureux et le plus pieux des baisers'.

It is at this point that the offer comes of a chair in the College de France. Michel is doubtful about accepting; will it not, he thinks, be a kind of slavery? In deciding to accept the offer he is again moved by pity for Marceline, because in his renewed intimacy

with her he has learned that she is tired of travelling. So ends the first part of Michel's narrative.

The drama which has been played in Part I—this Morality with the values transposed—we now see repeated twice, each time more briefly and more violently, until the pattern of events and emotions is worked out finally on a scale of desperation and death. As at the outset Michel's marriage to Marceline was disastrous, so his abandoning his life in the desert is a disaster. The course of lectures does indeed prove to be a life of slavery; it involves social dealings with commonplace people who irritate Michel, and whose presence reveals to him that Marceline is herself commonplace. Michel neglects Marceline more and more, until the death of their child brings on another crisis of guilt, and a decision to leave Paris, in order that they may be alone together, and that Marceline may rest and recover her health.

The third critical act of pity and well-doing is related by Michel thus, 'Je tâchai donc, et encore un fois, de refermer ma main sur mon amour. Mais qu'avais-je besoin de tranquille bonheur? Celui que me donnait et que représentait pour moi Marceline, était comme un repos pour qui ne se sent pas fatigué. Mais comme je sentais qu'elle était lasse et qu'elle avait besoin de mon amour, je l'en enveloppai et feignis que ce fut pour le besoin que j'en avais moi-même. Je sentais intolérablement sa souffrance; c'était pour l'en guérir que je l'aimais.' During their succeeding travels each of the two opposing principles in Michel's attitude to Marceline reaches its final climax of violence; on the night of her death he has abandoned her to visit a brothel.

This is the plot of *L'Immoraliste*, and it is in itself a tremendous illustration of de Sade's dictum. It is however reinforced by sub-plots, and the ideas—the ideas of urgent and general interest—are clarified by incidents, characters and elements about which I have so far said nothing. There is for instance Michel's account of his relationship with Charles. Charles is a victim of Michel's false personality, just as Marceline is, his 'dignity' is the equivalent of Marceline's 'love' for him as for Marceline, 'Il n'y a de dangereux dans le monde que la pitié et la bienfaisance.' And if the main plot is Sadistic, some of the incidents are strikingly so. The first of these is Michel's struggle with the driver, and the sexual excitement which both Michel and Marceline derive from it. Again, when Michel succeeds in overcoming his false personality, he hides from

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Marceline the way in which he is changing. At first the lying which this involves disgusts him, but later 'comme à chaque chose pour laquelle un premier dégoût est vaincu' lying becomes easy and even pleasant. In de Sade's words—'the greatest pleasures are born from conquered repugnances.' There are also the stories of rape and incest in the Heurtevent's house, and the famous incident in which Moktir steals the scissors. Of theft, de Sade says, 'il est certain qu'il entretient le courage, la force, l'adresse, toutes les vertus. . . .' and that he who steals is following 'le premier et le plus sacré des mouvements de la nature, celui de conserver sa propre existence, n'importe aux dépens de qui'. Finally there is the occasion on which Michel first falls ill, and spits blood. He at first attempts to hide this from Marceline, then as his attempt is successful he feels that her untroubled happiness is inimical, and it 'grows in him like an instinct' to tell her. She faints with horror, but when she recovers she acts with resolution and good sense, inspiring and nursing Michel through the worst days of his illness and so illustrating the effects of de Sade's 'fermeté soutenue'. This is indeed the one occasion on which Marceline appears as a human being, and not as an exquisitely appealing and pathetic lay figure.

Is *L'Immoraliste* Gide's masterpiece? There are two secondary points which could be made in arguing its claim. The first is that as an exposition of the doctrine of vocation it is more subtle than *La Porte Etroite* or *L'Ecole des Femmes*, and at the same time more forceful than *Les Caves du Vatican* and more lucid than *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*. The part which Michel succeeds in playing is his own; not particularly noble or dignified, nor altogether devoid of these qualities, but, at the cost of pain and bitter sacrifice, his own. And this theme of vocation is of supreme importance in Gide's work, one might say it is the trunk of the tree from which the branches grow, the theme to which all other themes are in their degrees subsidiary. It is for instance because the young are the receptacles of the sense of vocation that Gide believes that truth resides in them, that against their elders they are always right. Hence also comes his distrust of the family, the family which is perpetually in conspiracy against the young. 'Familles, je vous haïs!' says Ménalque in *Les Nourritures Terrestres*. In *L'Immoraliste* the main theme is expounded with a depth of subtlety, with a submerged, hushed irony, and yet with a final

effect of intense dramatic lucidity which is unequalled in the modern novel.

This brings us to the second point, the technique which is employed. It is the technique of the document, which Gide frequently uses, the diary or the letter used as a device whereby events are seen through more than one pair of eyes and so comprehended through the sympathy which they have excited in another mind. In *L'Immoraliste* Michel's actions are seen at three removes, first that of his own recollection, then the sympathy of his friends to whom he tells the story, finally by the fact that the whole narrative is understood to be contained in a letter written by one of the friends to the Président du Conseil. And so these actions, removed from the distant obscurity of the abnormal, the criminal, or the mad, are posed, with a compelling effect upon our sympathy, in the clear middle distance of drama.

Gide calls *L'Immoraliste* 'un fruit plein de cendre amer,' and compares it to the fruit that grows in the desert. It is indeed to the desert that the book should be compared; it is inhospitable, obsessing, deceptive. If after reading *L'Immoraliste* one turns to *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*, one is at once struck by the absence of this quality. One feels that the climate is more temperate, there is comic relief, there is sentimentality. We see this clearly if we compare Laure in *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* with Marceline in *L'Immoraliste*. Both are to an extraordinary degree pathetic and appealing, but whereas the pathos of Marceline has a dramatic purpose, the pathos of Laure has—apparently—got out of hand; it is almost hysterical. It is interesting also to compare the fate of Laure with that of Marceline: Laure has no tragedy, all that happens to her in the end is that she makes her husband as absurd as she is herself unhappy.

Nor is it Laure's fate alone which lacks dignity. Bernard—of whom it has been made quite clear that his salvation depends on separation from his family—when he hears of his father's pathetic loneliness, 'listens only to the voice of his heart' and returns home. Vincent, the half-hearted Sadist, ends up half mad and forgotten in North Africa. Armand rouses himself from stupor only to sell himself. The death of Boris is half suicide, half murder. La Perouse has passed even beyond suicide. Only the meretricious Passevant is unharmed, the ferocious Gheridanisol triumphant. Something worse still is reserved for Edouard. The



closing words of the book indicate that his fate is to be mere repetition; nothing at all happens to him.

The hostile world of *L'Immoraliste*, the world of Michel's career, and his family, is not all-powerful; it can be challenged, perhaps successfully challenged, and it is possible to escape from it, for a time at least, and so to renew one's strength. Although one cannot be happy and free in it one can achieve happiness and freedom despite it. But the world of *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* not only makes happiness and freedom impossible for its inhabitants, its power is extended until it is coincident with their most tenuous and evanescent hopes. We have a foretaste of this state of things in *L'Immoraliste*, in the character of Charles. Charles, like Marceline, is a victim of Michel, although unlike her he is not cast in a rôle of tragedy, he is merely made a fool of, injured, and forgotten. His affection for Michel is, however, like his 'dignity', a characteristic feature of that world which Michel feels is strangling him, the world of pity and falsity, the world in which Marceline must die.

What is the essential nature of this world? We know that there are things which stand outside it, things which it menaces; the Arab boys in their undespended youth, the Norman peasants, Ménalque, life in the desert. It is in fact by reference to these that Gide defines it; it is the world of the European bourgeoisie. The remark is made by a character in Renée Mauperin, 'Mais, entre nous, je ne sais pas jusqu'à quel point la bourgeoisie est le dernier mot des sociétés', and one aspect of Gide's activity as a novelist has been the pursuit of this question. It is bourgeois life which distorts the character of Michel; which thrusts down among the peasants and changes Charles from a gay and pleasant youth into a dull, priggish and affected man; which reaches out into North Africa and smothers the joyousness of the Arab boys. 'Les gens de la société' to whom Protos refers in *Les Caves du Vatican* are of course the bourgeoisie: it is they who permit the force of convention its most absolute tyranny, it is their children who are its most freely offered sacrifices. If Michel's actions are justifiable, they are justifiable because of the power and malignity of this enemy. If his narrative has meaning, if we, like his hearers, feel ourselves 'comme engagés', it is because we ourselves are not spectators.

In *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* this world has become even more distressing and more ignoble than in *L'Immoraliste*. Not only can it

not contain a great moral problem, but it can hardly allow such a problem to exist. To cherish a sense of vocation in such a world is mere naïvety: the 'chosen', the 'subtils' have simply been eliminated. The struggle of *L'Immoraliste* has almost ceased, and *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* is like a field on which the battle has been fought by day and on which at night only the wounded pursue their desperately urgent, slow, erratic and forlorn course. *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* is a work of despair, and it marks the limit of the use which Gide can make of the futility, hypocrisy and brutality of the bourgeois world as material for literature. Indeed the question is whether the despair has not welled up over the rim of objectivity, whether the plot itself does not share, as well as reflect, the confusion of this world, and whether the narcotic sentimentality and the palliative hysteria do not vitiate the quality of the writing. There is for example the question of technique. In *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* the document is Edouard's diary; part of the novel is in this form, and part in direct third-person narrative, and the effect of switching from one to another is distracting and gives an effect of incoherence. Confusion, repetition, sentimentality: if *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* has in fact these defects, it is by comparison with *L'Immoraliste* that they are revealed. By this comparison, Gide's other novels are likewise revealed as defective, *La Porte Etroite* as slight, *Les Caves du Vatican* as artificial. It must be insisted that this valuation is merely comparative, that *La Porte Etroite* is a profound and moving novel, *Les Caves du Vatican* a comedy among the best in the great European tradition of comic novels. It is nevertheless among the whole body of his work, upon *L'Immoraliste*, that exposition of dangerous principles, with its vitality, its power, and its classic restraint, that the fame of André Gide is most securely founded.

## ALBERTO MORAVIA IN THE COUNTRY

THE car stopped and they got out. In that spot the road passed in front of a completely wild and deserted gorge formed by the junction of two of those middle-sized rocky mountains. On the

other side the flooded plain spread out in large sheets of greyish frozen water alternating with clumps of bushes and groups of tufted trees. Here and there a ruin rose up out of the water showing crumbling walls extremely melancholy to the eye. The mountain gorge was also flooded; but at the end, where the two mountains joined, a bluish smoke rose half-way up the hill and remained suspended. At first sight it brought to mind the brazier of a charcoal-burner, afterwards, on looking more closely, a hut could be seen, hooded in its low roof of blackish straw. It was sunset, banks of low, cold clouds covered the sky, the air was motionless and seemed benumbed. Between the flooded area and the valley the asphalt ribbon of the road made an 'S' which seemed like the darting of a reptile seeking at all costs to escape.

'We must go as far as that hut up there,' said the young man, pointing to the smoke on the slope. 'They'll be able to give us a pail and some water.'

The girl made a moue of discontentment. She had a round, blossoming face, with a spoilt mouth, a little aquiline nose and large black inexpressive eyes. She was tall, and her coat of a large checked cloth softly outlined the curves of her full hips and breast. She wore no hat and her long brown hair curled about her forehead and her cheeks like a pretty kind of mane.

'Can't you get the water in some other way without having to go right up there?' she asked sulkily.

'How?' asked her companion. He was no more than twenty-five years old but the thick features of his thin face, his strong black moustache and nasal voice were already aggressively manly. He was dressed in sports fashion, with a check suit, plus-fours, a leather jacket, coloured golf stockings and a beret pulled down half-way over his forehead.

'Get on with it,' she replied, shrugging her shoulders.

'With my hands?' he asked ironically. The girl said nothing, looked around and seemed dissatisfied. 'I know,' she said suddenly, curving her full spoilt mouth again, 'all these halts are alike . . . for one reason or another we go to the peasant's house . . . but half-way there you always try to kiss me.'

Her companion shook his head, but seemed flattered by the accusation. 'Come, Ornella,' he said with feigned and forced seriousness, 'I swear that this time we are really going to fetch

water . . . in any case,' he added, looking at a large gold watch he wore on his wrist, 'there's not much time to lose if we want to be in town by dinner-time . . . make up your mind . . . if you like you can wait for me here'.

'Yes, all by myself,' she said in a quarrelsome voice, 'and then the soldiers' cars pass and they annoy me as they did this morning . . . and meanwhile you make your inquiries about the peasants . . . you gossip with them and forget my existence'.

'But hang it all,' the impatience in the young man's voice sounded false, he seemed so sure of himself, 'you don't want to wait because the soldiers annoy you . . . you don't want to come with me because you are afraid I shall kiss you . . . what do you want to do?'

'I'll come,' she decided suddenly, with peevish coquettishness, 'if you promise to be good'.

'I swear it.'

'Then let's go.'

He shut the door of the car and made towards the path that led to the hut. The girl followed him, walking uncertainly over the stones.

'I wonder,' he said as he preceded her, 'what the peasants who dwell in that hut can live on. There isn't any agriculture here nor for a long way around, the plain is flooded . . . but . . . it's a mystery to me.'

'They live on their income,' she said, clutching the young man's sleeve with her nails to prevent herself falling.

'I've already told you, Ornella,' he reproached her, 'that I don't like your lack of sensibility towards the sufferings of the poor . . . What the devil! . . . you seem to do it on purpose.'

'What I care about,' she said, pretending not to have heard him, 'is that you shouldn't stop to ask the peasants your eternal questions . . . I can't stand peasants.'

'On the contrary, you ought to talk to them,' he replied, 'by talking to them you learn a heap of interesting things.'

'Interesting for you, maybe.'

'But don't you know,' he said lightly, 'that we have "to go towards the people"?''

Now they were half-way between the hut and the main road. The blue smoke could be seen issuing clearly not from a chimney but from the swollen sides of the straw roof of the hut. The path

ran along half-way up the slope. Fifty yards lower down the water which filled the bottom of the valley did not reflect the sky but showed in a frozen transparency the spare grass of an opaque green colour which covered the ground. 'What an ugly place,' she said, shivering and looking about her.

From the top of one of the mountains a black bird began to fly down with wide-open wings, as if it had been made of paper, towards the bottom of the valley. 'What does it matter?' said her companion clumsily, 'we're here'. And in saying so he turned, put his arm round the girl's waist and drew her to him.

'There, you swore you wouldn't do it,' she cried. The young man smiled and tried to kiss her. She put the open palm of her hand on his face, as if to push him off. In this gesture her pretty face was twisted into an expression of ferocity and repulsion. But the gesture and the expression seemed to be due to coquetry and conventional repugnance rather than to anything else. The young man, notwithstanding her hand against his face, brought his lips ever nearer to hers. She changed her gesture and began to beat his face with her little fists. But her blows were too weak and not convincing. Rather than showing real indignation and unwillingness she seemed to be trying to feign them. And in fact, after a moment she stopped hitting him and let him kiss her with good grace.

Shutting her eyes and placing an affectionate and willing arm around his neck, 'What a horrid moustache,' she said suddenly as they separated.

'What horrid lipstick,' he replied with the vain tone of a man who believes he is irresistible, wiping his mouth and looking at the stains of rouge that remained on his handkerchief.

They began to walk once more towards the hut. By now they had covered three-quarters of the way and the main road seemed almost remote, with their little dark car standing still down there near the ditch, in the low light of the stormy sunset. From above an even greater extent of flooded plain could be seen. And other bushes, other groups of trees, other ruined houses were mirrored in the grey motionless waters.

The young man preceded her swaying his hips lightly, with such obvious vanity that she suddenly became extremely irritated. 'It would serve you right if I went back,' she said, stopping and stamping her feet.

‘Try.’

‘It’s just what I’m going to do.’

She turned and began to walk stumbling towards the road. The young man caught up with her, took her arm, and looking at her with conceited and ironical attention said: ‘Ornella, must you really always kick up a fuss?’

‘Why did you kiss me?’ she asked, already yielding.

By now they had reached the hut. It had a base of large stones laid on one another without cement and a roof of black tightly pressed straw which almost reached the ground. A little door or rather hatch with a lintel formed of a stone larger than the rest brought to mind a hutch for animals rather than a human habitation. A dead dry tree, with a trunk stripped of its bark and the branches reduced to split stumps, leaned on one side towards the hut. Two or three pots, blackened and cracked, a cup or two and a terracotta jug were hung up by their handles on the stumps. An axe was fixed by the blade on a fork in the branches. But what gave a singular character to this thorny, barkless tree was the whiteskull of an animal stuck by the orbit on the topmost branch. The long, white teeth grinned against the background of the gloomy sky. Other bones, ribs, vertebræ, thigh-bones gleamed, scattered everywhere in the space in front of the hut. In the middle of this space a black circle with some dead coals and two or three logs suggested the image of a fire and of people gathered round it.

‘And now,’ asked the girl, turning and looking about her with disgust, ‘what are we going to do?’

‘Knock and have ourselves received by the master of the house,’ answered her companion with satisfaction. He went to the door and banged on it with his fist.

The door opened almost at once, trembled, and opened wide. But no one appeared in the darkness that had taken the place of the rough boards of the doorway. ‘I say there,’ shouted the young man impatiently, bending and peering inside the hut, ‘I say, isn’t there anyone at home?’

‘Come in, come in, sir,’ cried a strident, sharp, cheerful voice.

‘Come along, let’s go inside,’ said the young man. ‘Go in there!’ she asked with repulsion. ‘What a lot of fuss, come along in,’ he repeated, taking her arm. She obeyed and stooping entered the hut. Her companion followed her.

For a moment they stood upright, their backs towards the

door. A dying fire was burning on the ground, in the middle of the hut, under a kind of iron tripod surmounted by a large black saucepan. All around this tripod the girl, awkward and embarrassed, saw several faces lit up unequally by the fire. They were boys' faces, rough and swollen, with little eyes and thick ruffled hair as though it were sticky with glue. The mother, among her children who clung close to her now and looked at the visitors in silence, bent forward to stir a spoon in the saucepan; and when the girl turned her eyes towards her she shuddered painfully.

Her face made one think of those rag dolls stuffed with sawdust which through long use and ill-treatment grow black and lose their shape without breaking. Her little eyes, extraordinarily bright, were lost in a sea of fine wrinkles in her fat swollen face. Her red cheeks seemed even redder in the glow from the fire. A long yellow tooth stuck out of her large smiling mouth. Her hair stood up round her head just as a badly treated doll's. There was good-naturedness in her face, but mingled with a disturbing and gay excitement. 'Good evening, good evening,' she repeated with her shrill voice.

'Are you the mistress of the house?' asked the young man. He too was put out by the woman's appearance but did not wish to show it.

'The Germans destroyed our house, flooded the farm, took away the cattle, stole all our stuff; this was the stable for the goats, sir,' cried the woman with impetuous cheerfulness.

'And what do you do now?' asked the young man. The girl, recognizing one of his interminable inquiries, made a bored face and nudged his arm with her elbow. But he shook his head as if to say 'Leave me alone!' The girl raised her eyes and sighed. 'What do we do?' went on the other woman meanwhile, 'we don't know what to do . . . My husband has malaria and can't work . . . my children have no clothes, no shoes,' and she pointed at the rags, the naked dirty feet of the children, 'we've finished our flour today . . . look.' She got up, went to a corner, came back with an empty bag and shook it in the air, raising a cloud of white dust. 'It's really finished,' she repeated with a satisfied air, throwing the bag away. And then, bending her smiling face towards the girl. 'What shall we do? Die of hunger?'

'You'll die of hunger,' repeated the young man, by now completely wrapped up in the dialogue. 'But let's see a bit . . . can't



you go to the next village and get the rationed stuff given you?’

‘The next village has been destroyed by bombs,’ she shouted with fervour, ‘the bombs destroyed it . . . and there’s no rations . . . there’s only stuff for those who can pay . . . and we have no money, sir.’

It was apparent that this information, given with such enthusiasm, awakened a kind of uneasy discomfort in the young man and he would have preferred it not to be true. ‘And yet your children don’t appear to be underfed, nor do you,’ he remarked. In fact the woman seemed well nourished, in a shapeless fashion, just like a rag doll. And the four children were all plump, although in a grim way.

‘We are not underfed because my children manage to find stuff,’ cried the woman with redoubled cheerfulness.

‘How do they find it?’

‘They steal, sir,’ she cried with the same enthusiasm with which at first she had cried: ‘We shall die of hunger.’

‘Let’s go away from here,’ murmured the girl, now frightened. But the young man paid no attention. ‘What do they steal?’

‘Oh, well sir, what they can . . . there are a lot of cattle on the mountains now . . . they steal lambs and kids . . . they go out at night and steal lambs and kids.’

‘But what about the shepherds?’ asked the young man. ‘Don’t they notice?’

‘No, the shepherds don’t notice . . . they notice afterwards . . . they shut the animals up, but my children go out at night, open the doors, and take away the lambs and the kids.’

‘They’ll arrest you,’ said the young man, suddenly severe.

‘How can they arrest us . . . there aren’t any *carabinieri* any more . . .’ the woman’s enthusiasm seemed to have reached its highest pitch. ‘And then the police are hungry,’ she added, shouting as though the young man were deaf, ‘they’re hungry too . . . everybody’s hungry today, sir . . . everybody . . .’

‘But it’s bad to steal, it’s a crime,’ he insisted obstinately.

‘It’s bad to steal,’ she cried almost with an affectionate air, ‘but it’s worse to die of hunger, sir.’

‘Come, give over, give over now, let’s go away,’ said the girl. She had spoken almost aloud, and the woman heard her. ‘You don’t like the hut, do you, miss?’ she shouted, ‘but we’re in the country . . . you must pity us and forgive . . . forgive and pity.’

'The young lady's in a hurry because we have to get back home,' said the young man.

'The young lady's pretty,' cried the woman, 'the young lady's well dressed . . . you don't feel at home here, do you, miss?'

Finally the young man decided to put an end to the dialogue. 'We came,' he said, 'to ask if you could lend us a vessel and tell us where there's a well where we can get some water.'

'A pail of water . . . at once,' cried the woman, 'water costs nothing.' She got up enthusiastically, went to the end of the hut and came back with a pail. 'You must go and get it outside,' she added, 'outside at the well . . . the well's a good way off . . . but my husband's at the well . . . my husband will help you.' She went to the door and shouted with a long wailing voice, 'Alfredo!' A man's voice, no less wailing replied from afar, 'Leonía!' Then the silence returned.

'Go along, sir,' said the woman, holding out the pail to him, 'go along . . . my husband will wait for you by the well . . . take the path behind the hut . . . but it would be better for the young lady to wait here,' she added hurriedly, 'the path isn't a good one . . . the young lady can warm herself by the fire'.

The young man, who had already put his head outside the door, drew himself up and looked at the girl. 'On the whole, it's better if you wait for me here. I'll go straight there and back.' The girl would have liked to have protested but was not in time. 'Sit here,' said the woman, dusting a bench near the fire with alacrity. Meanwhile the young man had gone out. The girl did not dare to follow him and with a fastidious air, full of precaution, sat down on one corner of the bench. The woman went at once to shut the door. The hut fell into darkness immediately except for the tripod around which the dying fire shed a glowing circle.

'Warm yourself, miss,' said the woman. She went to the end of the hut and began to rummage. Leaning one against the other in a heap of limbs and rags, the four children fixed their intent eyes upon the girl. She opened her bag, took out a case and a cigarette-lighter, lit a cigarette, put the objects back, and, leaning forward, crossed her legs. The woman came back from the end of the hut with an armful of twigs and an axe. She put the axe on the bench and pushed the twigs under the saucepan, among the cinders. Then she went down on her belly, her cheek against the muddy pavement, and began to blow. The flames caught round the twigs,

they blazed up, and their red tongues lapped round the black sides of the saucepan. Sparks flew crackling up the shadowy hut.

'There's a nice fire burning,' shouted the woman gaily. 'You like the fire, don't you, miss? . . . It's warm, it shelters you from the cold . . . give me your handbag, miss.' These last words were pronounced without any change of tone. The girl looked at her, her face grew white, her lips trembled. 'My handbag . . . why?'

'But I told you, miss,' shouted the woman with a pleading, joyful tone, full of emotion; 'I told you . . . we steal . . . if not, how could we manage?' She bent forward, took the girl's handbag from her lap, opened it and threw its contents on the ground. The cigarette-case, the lighter, the lipstick, powder-case and other objects fell on the ground. One of the boys, attracted by the glitter of those valuable things, stretched out his hand. His mother gave him an odd blow on the head, something between a slap and a punch. 'Hands down!' Then she turned to the girl and asked her vivaciously, 'Is it all gold, miss, all gold?'

'Mario, Mario,' the girl suddenly shouted, leaping to her feet. But the woman was swifter than she, picked up the axe and went to stand between her and the door. 'Why do you call him, miss? . . . he's with my husband at the well.' She looked at her for a moment as if to see whether she had been understood. 'My husband has the gun,' she suddenly added joyfully.

The girl said nothing. She looked at the woman, put one hand to her mouth and bit it.

'Sit down, miss,' continued the woman, 'but take off your coat first. . . . I need the coat too.' And she made as if to touch the collar of the girl's coat.

'No, I'll take it off by myself,' said the girl in a high distant voice. Hurriedly she unbuttoned the large buttons covered with cloth, undid the ribbons inside, and tried to slip it off. 'Wait a minute, miss,' cried the woman, jumping forward, 'wait a minute . . . I'll help you . . .' Notwithstanding the desperately unwilling movements of the girl, she took off her coat and threw it over her arm, just like a maid helping her mistress to get undressed before going to bed. 'And now take off your shoes, miss . . . your shoes, too.'

'But,' said the girl, white-faced with trembling lips, 'how shall I be able to walk then?'

'You'll walk quite all right . . . my children all go barefoot . . .

and then when you go home you'll buy yourself another pair of shoes.'

The girl was now wearing a light havana woollen dress with white cuffs and collar. She sat down on the bench and leant down, about to undo her shoes. They were sports shoes, brown, with rubber soles. 'No, miss,' cried the woman, 'I'll take off your shoes for you.' She threw herself on her knees on the ground, placed the girl's foot on her lap and, working delicately with her thick, earthy fingers, she undid the shoe and took it off, afterwards placing it on one side. She took off the other in the same way, but this time she could not help admiring it a moment in the light from the fire. 'What a pretty foot you have,' she went on, caressing the girl's small curled-up foot. 'What a pretty tiny little foot . . . and what about your silk stockings, miss?' she added, lifting her face in an attitude of prayer, 'don't you want to give me your silk stockings?'

'Take them, take everything,' cried the girl, and burst into a terrified nervous weeping, sobbing against her uplifted arm.

'Cry, cry, miss, it'll do you good . . . I cried too when the Germans took my little bits of gold from me, and afterwards I felt better.'

'Take them . . . take them,' she repeated. Without removing her arm from her face and continuing to sob, she placed her other hand on the hem of her dress, turned it up over her knees, stretched her pretty rounded leg clothed in silk out towards the fire, and slipped her fingers up her thigh to undo her suspenders. The woman, on her knees, looked at her ecstatically, her hands lifted and open as if to mean that she did not intend to touch her, that she would let her manage by herself. When she had undone the stocking on her left leg the girl pulled it down as far as her knee, then twisted round on her right side, stretched out the other leg and struggling with her fingers in the complicated folds of her dress, undid the second stocking too and slipped it down to her shin. At last she covered her face with both arms and remained motionless, in a despairing attitude, her dress turned up over her knees, her legs with the stockings hanging, stretched out as if in offering.

'Thank you, miss, thank you,' repeated the woman gratefully. She took the edge of the stocking in both hands and rolling it down the leg, as an expert lady's maid would have done, she

reached the foot with it; then passing one hand under the heel she took off the stocking completely. She repeated the same process with the other stocking and stood up. 'I'll put the stockings on myself . . . and the shoes too,' she shouted, as if she thought she might console the girl by revealing to her the final destination of the things she had stolen. 'But,' she added, sitting down and examining the stuff, 'with the coat I'm going to make trousers for the boys . . . I can get two pairs of trousers out of it, at least,' she shouted, pleased. 'And perhaps a jacket for Natalino, too,' she added.

The girl said nothing. She was sobbing, her long white legs stretched out towards the fire. The woman, who had finished examining the coat, folded it up carefully and placed it on the bench. She rolled up each stocking and put them inside the shoes, which she placed on the ground below the coat. Then she turned towards the girl and shouted gaily: 'Haven't you anything else, miss . . . haven't you any rings, necklaces, bracelets? When I got married I had rings, necklaces, bracelets . . . and the Germans have taken everything . . . everything, miss.'

'I have nothing more,' she replied, sobbing.

The woman said, as if speaking to herself: 'You have a pretty dress, but I won't take that from you . . . we women can't show ourselves without a dress, can we, miss,' and leaning forwards she uncovered the saucepan and began to stir with the spoon violently in the steam from the food. The children who until then had been motionless, now stretched their faces towards the steam.

'Do you want to eat?' shouted the woman, 'do you want to eat with us? . . . It's kid . . . country fare, of course.'

'I don't want to eat,' said the girl. She took her arm from her face, pulled down her dress and sat sideways, turning her back to the woman. She tried to avoid placing her bare feet on the ground. But her heel was already all dirty with mud.

The woman said to her children: 'The young lady doesn't want to eat,' and fished up the first piece of meat with a large leaden fork and held it out to one of the boys, who immediately seized it and got his teeth into it. She distributed three other pieces of meat, one for each child, took one for herself and began to chew fiercely, making all her face greasy. 'Don't you want to eat . . . really, you don't want to?' she insisted with her teeth in a mouthful, turning towards the girl.

The girl did not move, remained silent. The door opened and the young man, without his beret, pale and scared-looking, put his head in at the door of the hut. 'Ornella,' he said.

The girl got up hastily and, slipping on the muddy ground, left the hut. By now it was almost evening, and in the shade behind the young man she perceived the figure of a man, standing upright, with a long face and dark beard, watchful eyes, his hand on the strap of his gun. She looked at her friend. He too was barefoot, in trousers and shirt-sleeves.

'It's dark,' came the woman's voice, 'but Alfredo will accompany you . . . here, Alfredo.' She slipped out of the hut, handing her husband a bunch of burning reeds. The red light leapt up into their faces and all around them it was quite dark.

Silently the man moved, going ahead of the two young people who had been robbed, with the torch in his hand.

'Goodbye, miss, goodbye,' came the woman's voice.

The girl remained silent and clung to her companion's side. He too was silent. He was carrying the pail of water and walked with bent head, setting his feet with difficulty among the stones and mud. The little, contracted feet of the girl beside his seemed to be performing a kind of dance. The torch in front of them left the man in the shade and seemed to walk alone in the night.

Frozen and intent upon avoiding the sharp flints and the thick mud in which their feet kept sliding, they did not notice that they had left the path for the road until the smooth asphalt took the place of the rocky surface. The young man went to the car, opened the hood and began to pour the water in. The girl opened the door and threw herself on the seat.

The young man emptied the pail and gave it back to the man. He said 'Good evening' calmly and vanished in the night.

The young man returned to the car, got in, shut the door and started up the engine: 'They have robbed me of everything, everything,' she said, clinging to him, with a voice made hollow and distant by fear.

'And what about me, then?' he replied, pointing to his bare foot which was pressing the starter. The car started, turned the bend in front of the gorge, took the long straight road and began to make speed in the night preceded by a halo of soft white light on the grey ribbon of the asphalt.

[Translated from the Italian by VIVIAN PRAZ]



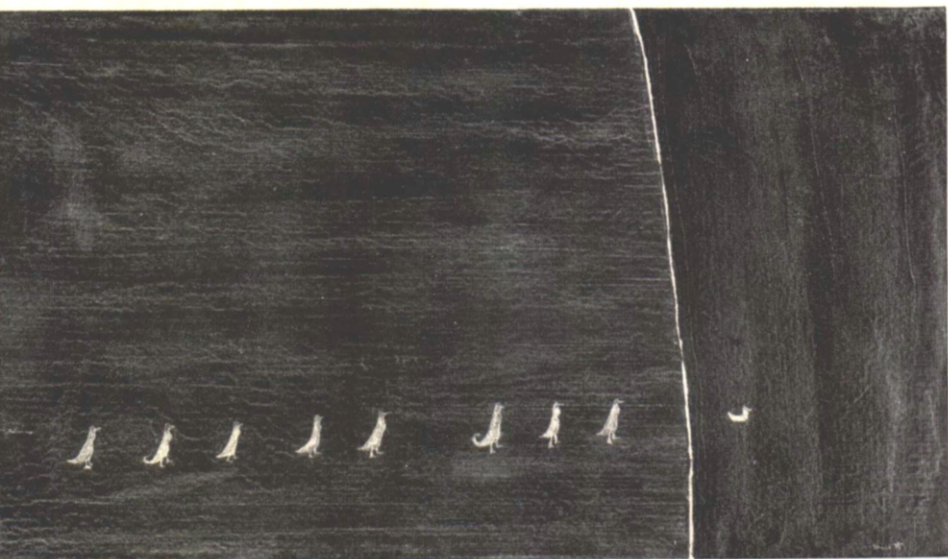


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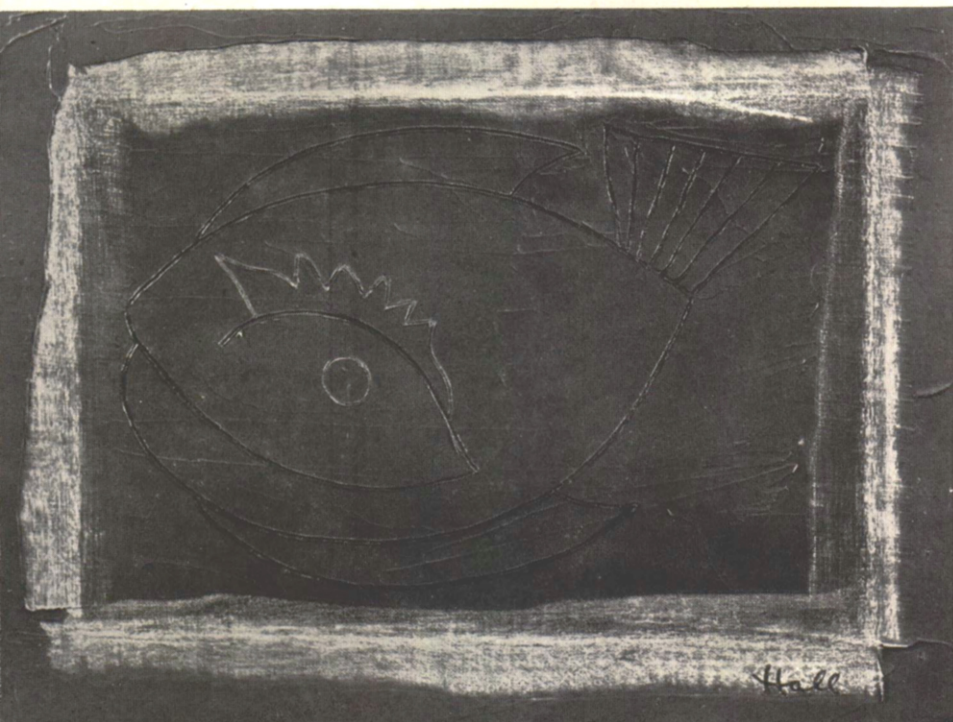




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# p o l e m i c

will be a symposium of philosophy, psychology, aesthetics and sociology. The name **polemie** has been chosen because it suggests that we intend to encourage an exchange of opinions and ideas rather than to make propaganda for any compact system or predetermined outlook.

We assume that if language is finite, and if existence is infinite, every verbal proposition will be limited in its truth; and also since speech is inherited from the unscientific and magical past, its whole structure and vocabulary must be suspected to be less than precisely accurate as a means of explaining the universe. It follows that certainty, expressed in words, may always be false and reactionary.

Difference of opinion will therefore be understood as a natural reflection of the unlimited intricacy of the world we live in, and articles from more than one point of view, on a given subject, will be printed in each number. At the same time, the editorial policy will not be quite unprejudiced; it will assume that separately during the last fifty years there have been four revolutionary developments which are significant for the future of human thought and behaviour:

- 1 The discovery of the unconscious by Freud
- 2 The tendency of philosophy, as a subject, to develop into a science of verbal meaning (semantics, symbolism, logical positivism)
- 3 The trend in the arts away from representation towards expression and construction
- 4 The evolution of marxism as the Faith of tens of millions of people in Europe and Asia.

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